THE LORD OF MISRULE
THE WINE PRESS
A BELGIAN CHRISTMAS EVE
THE NEW MORNING
THE ELFIN ARTIST

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COLLECTED POEMS

VOLUME III.

COLLECTED POEMS

BY

ALFRED NOYES

VOLUME THREE

NEW YORK
FREDERICK A. STOKES COMPANY
PUBLISHERS

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Printed in the United States of America

335-9

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COLLECTED POEMS

THE LORD OF MISRULE

AND OTHER POEMS

THE LORD OF MISRULE

"On May days the wild heads of the parish would choose a Lord of Misrule, whom they would follow even into the church, though the minister were at prayer or preaching, dancing and swinging their may-boughs about like devils incarnate."— OLD PURITAN WRITER.

ALL on a fresh May morning, I took my love to church,
To see if Parson Primrose were safely on his perch.
He scarce had got to *Thirdly,* or squire begun to snore,
When, like a sun-lit sea-wave,
A green and crimson sea-wave,
A frolic of madcap May-folk came whooping through the door:—

Come up, come in with streamers!
Come in, with boughs of may!
Come up and thump the sexton,
And carry the clerk away.
Now skip like rams, ye mountains,
Ye little hills, like sheep!
Come up and wake the people
That parson puts to sleep.

They tickled their nut-brown tabors. Their garlands flew in showers,
And lasses and lads came after them, with feet like dancing flowers.

Their queen had torn her green gown, and bared a shoulder as white,
O, white as the may that crowned her,
While all the minstrels round her
Tilted back their crimson hats and sang for sheer delight:

Come up, come in with streamers!
Come in, with boughs of may!
Now by the gold upon your toe
You walked the primrose way.
Come up, with white and crimson!
O, shake your bells and sing;
Let the porch bend, the pillars bow,
Before our Lord, the Spring!

The dusty velvet hassocks were dabbled with fragrant dew.
The font grew white with hawthorn. It frothed in every pew.
Three petals clung to the sexton's beard as he mopped and mowed at the clerk,
And "Take that sexton away," they cried;
"Did Nebuchadnezzar eat may?" they cried.
"Nay, that was a prize from Betty," they cried, "for kissing her in the dark."

Come up, come in with streamers!
Come in, with boughs of may!
Who knows but old Methuselah
May hobble the green-wood way?
If Betty could kiss the sexton,
If Kitty could kiss the clerk,
Who knows how Parson Primrose
Might blossom in the dark?

The congregation spluttered. The squire grew purple and all,
And every little chorister bestrode his carven stall.
The parson flapped like a magpie, but none could hear his prayers;
For Tom Fool flourished his tabor,
Flourished his nut-brown tabor,
Bashed the head of the sexton, and stormed the pulpit stairs.

High in the old oak pulpit
This Lord of all misrule—
I think it was Will Summers
That once was Shakespeare's fool—
Held up his hand for silence,
And all the church grew still:
"And are you snoring yet," he said,
"Or have you slept your fill?

"Your God still walks in Eden, between the ancient trees,
Where Youth and Love go wading through pools of primroses.
And this is the sign we bring you, before the darkness fall,
That Spring is risen, is risen again,
That Life is risen, is risen again,
That Love is risen, is risen again, and Love is Lord of all.

"At Paske began our morrice
And, ere Pentecost, our May;
Because, albeit your words be true,
You know not what you say.
You chatter in church like jackdaws,
Words that would wake the dead,
Were there one breath of life in you,
One drop of blood," he said.

"*He died and He went down to hell!* You know not what you mean.
Our rafters were of green fir. Also our beds were green.
But out of the mouth of a fool, a fool, before the darkness fall,
We tell you He is risen again,
The Lord of Life is risen again,
The boughs put forth their tender buds, and Love is Lord of all!"

He bowed his head. He stood so still,
They bowed their heads as well.
And softly from the organ-loft
The song began to swell.

Come up with blood-red streamers,
The reeds began the strain.
The *vox humana* pealed on high,
The Spring is risen again!

The *vox angelica* replied — *The shadows flee away!*
Our house-beams were of cedar. Come in, with boughs of may!
The *diapason* deepened it — *Before the darkness fall,*
We tell you He is risen again!
Our God hath burst His prison again!
The Lord of Life is risen again; and Love is Lord of all.

THE REPEAL

I DREAMED the Eternal had repealed
His cosmic code of law last night.
Our prayers had made the Unchanging yield.
Caprice was king from depth to height.

On Beachy Head a shouting throng
Had fired a beacon to proclaim
Their license. With unmeasured song
They proved it, dancing in the flame.

They quarrelled. One desired the sun,
And one desired the stars to shine.
They closed and wrestled and burned as one,
And the white chalk grew red as wine.

The furnace licked and purred and rolled,
A laughing child held up its hands
Like dreadful torches, dropping gold;
For pain was dead at their commands.

Painless and wild as clouds they burned,
Till the restricted Rose of Day
With all its glorious laws returned,
And the wind blew their ashes away.

THE SEARCH-LIGHTS

"Political morality differs from individual morality because there is no power above the state."

Shadow by shadow, stripped for fight,
The lean black cruisers search the sea.
Night-long their level shafts of light
Revolve, and find no enemy.
Only they know each leaping wave
May hide the lightning, and their grave.

And in the land they guard so well
Is there no silent watch to keep?
An age is dying, and the bell
Rings midnight on a vaster deep.
But over all its waves, once more,
The search-lights move, from shore to shore.

And captains that we thought were dead,
And dreamers that we thought were dumb,
And voices that we thought were fled,
Arise, and call us, and we come;
And "search in thine own soul," they cry;
"For there, too, lurks thine enemy."

Search for the foe in thine own soul,
The sloth, the intellectual pride;
The trivial jest that veils the goal
For which our fathers lived and died;
The lawless dreams, the cynic Art,
That rend thy nobler self apart.

Not far, not far into the night,
These level swords of light can pierce;
Yet for her faith does England fight,
Her faith in this our universe;
Believing Truth and Justice draw
From founts of everlasting law;

Therefore a Power above the State,
The unconquerable Power returns.
The fire, the fire that made her great
Once more upon her altar burns.
Once more, redeemed and healed and whole,
She moves to the Eternal Goal.

FORWARD

A thousand creeds and battle-cries,
A thousand warring social schemes,
A thousand new moralities,
And twenty thousand thousand dreams!

Each on his own anarchic way,
From the old order breaking free,—
Our ruined world desires, you say,
License, once more, not Liberty.

But ah, beneath the struggling foam,
When storm and change are on the deep,
How quietly the tides come home,
And how the depths of sea-shine sleep;

And we who march towards a goal,
Destroying only to fulfil
The law, the law of that great soul
Which moves beneath your alien will;

We, that like foemen meet the past
Because we bring the future, know
We only fight to achieve at last
A great re-union with our foe;

Re-union in the truths that stand
When all our wars are rolled away;
Re-union of the heart and hand
And of the prayers wherewith we pray;

Re-union in the common needs,
The common strivings of mankind;
Re-union of our warring creeds
In the one God that dwells behind.

Then — in that day — we shall not meet
Wrong with new wrong, but right with right;
Our faith shall make your faith complete
When our battalions re-unite.

Forward! — what use in idle words? —
Forward, O warriors of the soul!
There will be breaking up of swords
When that new morning makes us whole.

A SPELL

(AN EXCELLENT WAY TO GET A FAIRY)

Gather, first, in your left hand
(This must be at fall of day)
Forty grains of wild sea-sand
Where you think a mermaid lay.
I have heard that it is best
If you gather it, warm and sweet,
Out of the dint of her left breast
Where you see her heart has beat.

Out of the dint in that sweet sand
Gather forty grains, I say;
Yet — if it fail you — understand,
There remains a better way.

Out of this you melt your glass
While the veils of night are drawn,
Whispering, till the shadows pass,
"Nixie — pixie — leprechaun!"
Then you blow your magic vial,
Shape it like a crescent moon,
Set it up and make your trial,
Singing, *"Elaby, ah, come soon!"*

Round the cloudy crescent go,
On the hill-top, in the dawn,
Singing softly, on tip-toe,
"Elaby Gathon! Elaby Gathon!
Nixie — pixie — leprechaun!"

Bring the blood of a white hen
Slaughtered at the break of day,
While the cock, in the fairy glen,
Thrusts his gold neck every way,
Over the brambles, peering, calling,
Under the ferns, with a sudden fear,
Far and wide — as the dews are falling —
Clamouring, calling, everywhere.

Round the crimson vial go,
On the hill-top, in the dawn,
Singing softly, on tip-toe,
"Nixie — pixie — leprechaun!"
If this fail, at break of day,
I can show you a better way.

Bring the buds of the hazel-copse,
Where two lovers kissed at noon;
Bring the crushed red wild-thyme tops
Where they murmured under the moon.
Bring the four-leaved clover also,
One of the white, and one of the red,
Bring the flakes of the may that fall so
Lightly over their bridal bed.

Drop them into the vial — so —
On the hill-top, in the dawn,
Singing softly, on tip-toe,
"Nixie — pixie — leprechaun!"
And, if once will not suffice,
Do it thrice!
If this fail, at break of day,
There remains a better way.

Bring an old and crippled child
— Ah, tread softly, on tip-toe! —
Tattered, tearless, wonder-wild,
From that under-world below,
Bring a wizened child of seven
Reeking from the City slime,
Out of hell into your heaven,
Set her knee-deep in the thyme.

Feed her — clothe her — even so!
Set her on a fairy-throne.
When her eyes begin to glow
Leave her for an hour — alone.

You shall need no spells or charms,
On that hill-top, in that dawn.
When she lifts her wasted arms,
You shall see a veil withdrawn.
There shall be no veil between them,
Though her head be old and wise!
You shall know that she has seen them
By the glory in her eyes.

Round her irons on that hill
Earth has tossed a fairy fire:
Watch, and listen, and be still,
Lest you baulk your own desire.

When she sees four azure wings
Light upon her claw-like hand;
When she lifts her head and sings,
You shall hear and understand:
You shall hear a bugle calling
Wildly over the dew-dashed down;
And a sound as of the falling
Ramparts of a conquered town.

You shall hear a sound like thunder;
And a veil shall be withdrawn,
When her eyes grow wide with wonder
On that hill-top, in that dawn.

CRIMSON SAILS

When Salomon sailed from Ophir . . .
The clouds of Sussex thyme
That crown the cliffs in mid-July
Were all we needed — you and I —
But Salomon sailed from Ophir,
And broken bits of rhyme
Blew to us on the white chalk coast
From O, what elfin clime?

A peacock butterfly flaunted
Its four great crimson wings,
As over the edge of the chalk it flew
Black as a ship on the Channel blue . . .
When Salomon sailed from Ophir,—
He brought, as the high sun brings,
Honey and spice to the Queen of the South,
Sussex or Saba, a song for her mouth,
Sweet as the dawn-wind over the downs
And the tall white cliffs that the wild thyme crowns
A song that the whole sky sings: —

When Salomon sailed from Ophir,
With Olliphants and gold,
The kings went up, the kings went down,
Trying to match King Salomon's crown,
But Salomon sacked the sunset,
Wherever his black ships rolled.
He rolled it up like a crimson cloth,
And crammed it into his hold.

Chorus: Salomon sacked the sunset!
Salomon sacked the sunset!
He rolled it up like a crimson cloth,
And crammed it into his hold.

His masts were Lebanon cedars,
His sheets were singing blue,
But that was never the reason why

He stuffed his hold with the sunset sky!
The kings could cut their cedars,
And sail from Ophir, too;
But Salomon packed his heart with dreams
And all the dreams were true.

Chours: The kings could cut their cedars,
Cut their Lebanon cedars;
But Salomon packed his heart with dreams,
And all the dreams were true.

When Salomon sailed from Ophir,
He sailed not as a king.
The kings — they weltered to and fro,
Tossed wherever the winds could blow;
But Salomon's tawny seamen
Could lift their heads and sing,
Till all their crowded clouds of sail
Grew sweeter than the Spring.

Chorus: Their singing sheets grew sweeter,
Their crowded clouds grew sweeter,
For Salomon's tawny seamen, sirs,
Could lift their heads and sing:

When Salomon sailed from Ophir
With crimson sails so tall,
The kings went up, the kings went down,
Trying to match King Salomon's crown;
But Salomon brought the sunset
To hang on his Temple wall;
He rolled it up like a crimson cloth,
So his was better than all.

Chorus: Salomon gat the sunset,
Salomon gat the sunset;
He carried it like a crimson cloth
To hang on his Temple wall.

BLIND MOONE OF LONDON

Blind Moone of London
He fiddled up and down,
Once for an angel,
And twice for a crown.
He fiddled at the *Green Man,*
He fiddled at the *Rose;*
And where they have buried him
Not a soul knows.

All his tunes are dead and gone, dead as yesterday.
And his lanthorn flits no more
Round the *Devil Tavern* door,
Waiting till the gallants come, singing from the play;
Waiting in the wet and cold!
All his Whitsun tales are told.
He is dead and gone, sirs, very far away.

He would not give a silver groat
For good or evil weather.
He carried in his white cap
A long red feather.
He wore a long coat
Of the Reading-tawny kind,
And darned white hosen
With a blue patch behind.

So — one night — he shuffled past, in his buckled shoon.
We shall never see his face,
Twisted to that queer grimace,
Waiting in the wind and rain, till we called his tune;
Very whimsical and white,
Waiting on a blue Twelfth Night!
He is grown too proud at last — old blind Moone.

Yet, when May was at the door,
And Moone was wont to sing,
Many a maid and bachelor
Whirled into the ring:

Standing on a tilted wain
He played so sweet and loud
The Mayor forgot his golden chain
And jiggled it with the crowd.

Old blind Moone, his fiddle scattered flowers along the street;
Into the dust of Brookfield Fair
Carried a shining primrose air,
Crooning like a poor mad maid, O, very low and sweet,
Drew us close, and held us bound,
Then — to the tune of *Pedlar's Pound,*
Caught us up, and whirled us round, a thousand frolic feet.

Master Shakespeare was his host.
The tribe of Benjamin
Used to call him Merlin's Ghost
At the *Mermaid Inn.*
He was only a crowder,
Fiddling at the door.
Death has made him prouder.
We shall not see him more.

Only — if you listen, please — through the master's themes,
You shall hear a wizard strain,
Blind and bright as wind and rain,
Shaken out of willow-trees, and shot with elfin gleams.
How should I your true love know?
Scraps and snatches — even so!
That is old blind Moone again, fiddling in your dreams.

Once, when Will had called for sack
And bidden him up and play,
Old blind Moone, he turned his back,
Growled, and walked away,
Sailed into a thunder-cloud,
Snapped his fiddle-string,
And hobbled from *The Mermaid*
Sulky as a king.

Only from the darkness now, steals the strain we knew:
No one even knows his grave!
Only here and there a stave,

Out of all his hedge-row flock, be-drips the may with dew.
And I know not what wild bird
Carried us his parting word: —
Master Shakespeare needn't take the crowder's fiddle, too.

Will has wealth and wealth to spare.
Give him back his own.
At his head a grass-green turf,
At his heels a stone.
See his little lanthorn-spark.
Hear his ghostly tune,
Glimmering past you, in the dark,
Old blind Moone!

All the little crazy brooks, where love and sorrow run
Crowned with sedge and singing wild,
Like a sky-lark — or a child! —
Old blind Moone, he knew their springs, and played 'em every one;
Stood there in the darkness, blind,
And sang them into Shakespeare's mind . . .
Old blind Moone of London, O now his songs are done,
The light upon his lost white face, they say it was the sun!

The light upon his poor old face, they say it was the sun!

OLD GREY SQUIRREL

A GREAT while ago, there was a school-boy.
He lived in a cottage by the sea.
And the very first thing he could remember
Was the rigging of the schooners by the quay.

He could watch them, when he woke, from his window,
With the tall cranes hoisting out the freight.
And he used to think of shipping as a sea-cook,
And sailing to the Golden Gate.

For he used to buy the yellow penny dreadfuls,
And read them where he fished for conger eels,

And listened to the lapping of the water,
The green and oily water round the keels.

There were trawlers with their shark-mouthed flat-fish,
And red nets hanging out to dry,
And the skate the skipper kept because he liked 'em,
And landsmen never knew the fish to fry.

There were brigantines with timber out of Norroway,
Oozing with the syrups of the pine.
There were rusty dusty schooners out of Sunderland,
And ships of the Blue Cross line.

And to tumble down a hatch into the cabin
Was better than the best of broken rules;
For the smell of 'em was like a Christmas dinner,
And the feel of 'em was like a box of tools.

And, before he went to sleep in the evening,
The very last thing that he could see
Was the sailor-men a-dancing in the moonlight
By the capstan that stood upon the quay.

He is perched upon a high stool in London.
The Golden Gate is very far away.
They caught him, and they caged him, like a squirrel.
He is totting up accounts, and going grey.

He will never, never, never sail to 'Frisco.
But the very last thing that he will see
Will be sailor-men a-dancing in the sunrise
By the capstan that stands upon the quay. . . .

To the tune of an old concertina,
By the capstan that stands upon the quay.

THE GREAT NORTH ROAD

Just as the moon was rising, I met a ghostly pedlar
Singing for company beneath his ghostly load,—
Once, there were velvet lads with vizards on their faces,
Riding up to rob me on the great North Road.

Now, my pack is heavy, and my pocket full of guineas
Chimes like a wedding-peal, but little I enjoy
Roads that never echo to the chirrup of their canter,—
The gay Golden Farmer and the Hereford Boy.

Rogues were they all, but their raid was from Elfland!
Shod with elfin silver were the steeds they bestrode.
Merlin buckled on the spurs that wheeled thro' the wet fern
Bright as Jack-o'-Lanthorns off the great North Road.

Tales were told in country inns when Turpin rode to Ripple-
side!
Puck tuned the fiddle-strings, and country maids grew coy,
Tavern doors grew magical when Colonel Jack might tap
at them,
The gay Golden Farmer and the Hereford Boy.

What are you seeking then? I asked this honest pedlar.
— O, Mulled Sack or Natty Hawes might ease me of my
load! —
Where are they flown then? — Flown where I follow;
They are all gone for ever up the great North Road.

Rogues were they all; but the white dust assoils 'em!
Paradise without a spice of deviltry would cloy.
Heavy is my pack till I meet with Jerry Abershaw,
The gay Golden Farmer and the Hereford Boy.

THE RIVER OF STARS

(A TALE OF NIAGARA)

The lights of a hundred cities are fed by its midnight power.
Their wheels are moved by its thunder. But they, too, have their hour.
The tale of the Indian lovers, a cry from the years that are flown,
While the river of stars is rolling,
Rolling away to the darkness,
Abides with the power in the midnight, where love may find its own.

She watched from the Huron tents till the first star shook in the air.
The sweet pine scented her fawn-skins, and breathed from her braided hair.
Her crown was of milk-white blood-root, because of the tryst she would keep,
Beyond the river of beauty
That drifted away in the darkness
Drawing the sunset thro' lilies, with eyes like stars, to the deep.

He watched, like a tall young wood-god, from the red pine that she named;
But not for the peril behind him, where the eyes of the Mohawks flamed.
Eagle-plumed he stood. But his heart was hunting afar,
Where the river of longing whispered . . .
And one swift shaft from the darkness
Felled him, her name in his death-cry, his eyes on the sunset star.

. . . . . .

She stole from the river and listened. The moon on her wet skin shone.
As a silver birch in a pine-wood, her beauty flashed and was gone.

There was no wave in the forest. The dark arms closed her round.
But the river of life went flowing,
Flowing away to the darkness,
For her breast grew red with his heart's blood, in a night where the stars are drowned.

Teach me, O my lover, as you taught me of love in a day,
Teach me of death, and for ever, and set my feet on the way,
To the land of the happy shadows, the land where you are flown.
— And the river of death went weeping,
Weeping away to the darkness.—
Is the hunting good, my lover, so good that you hunt alone?

She rose to her feet like a shadow. She sent a cry thro' the night,
Sa-sa-kuon, the death-whoop, that tells of triumph in fight.
It broke from the bell of her mouth like the cry of a wounded bird,
But the river of agony swelled it
And swept it along to the darkness,
And the Mohawks, couched in the darkness, leapt to their feet as they heard.

Close as the ring of the clouds that menace the moon with death,
At once they circled her round. Her bright breast panted for breath.
With only her own wild glory keeping the wolves at bay,
While the river of parting whispered,
Whispered away to the darkness,
She looked in their eyes for a moment, and strove for a word to say.

Teach me, O my lover! — She set her foot on the dead.
She laughed on the painted faces with their rings of yellow and red,—
I thank you, wolves of the Mohawk, for a woman's hands might fail.—

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—And the river of vengeance chuckled,
Chuckled away to the darkness,—
But ye have killed where I hunted. I have come to the end of my trail.

I thank you, braves of the Mohawk, who laid this thief at my feet.
He tore my heart out living, and tossed it his dogs to eat.
Ye have taught him of death in a moment, as he taught me of love in a day.
—And the river of passion deepened,
Deepened and rushed to the darkness.—
And yet may a woman requite you, and set your feet on the way.

For the woman that spits in my face, and the shaven heads that gibe,
This night shall a woman show you the tents of the Huron tribe.
They are lodged in a deep valley. With all things good it abounds.
Where the red-eyed, green-mooned river
Glides like a snake to the darkness,
I will show you a valley, Mohawks, like the Happy Hunting Grounds.

Follow! They chuckled, and followed like wolves to the glittering stream.
Shadows obeying a shadow, they launched their canoes in a dream.
Alone, in the first, with the blood on her breast, and her milk-white crown,
She stood. She smiled at them, *Follow,*
Then urged her canoe to the darkness,
And, silently flashing their paddles, the Mohawks followed her down.

. . . . . .

And now—as they slid thro' the pine-woods with their peaks of midnight blue,
She heard, in the broadening distance, the deep sound that she knew,

A mutter of steady thunder that grew as they glanced along;
But ever she glanced before them
And danced away to the darkness,
And or ever they heard it rightly, she raised her voice in a song: —

The wind from the Isles of the Blesséd, it blows across the foam.
It sings in the flowing maples of the land that was my home.
Where the moose is a morning's hunt, and the buffalo feeds from the hand.—
And the river of mockery broadened,
Broadened and rolled to the darkness —
And the green maize lifts its feathers, and laughs the snow from the land.

The river broadened and quickened. There was nought but river and sky.
The shores were lost in the darkness. She laughed and lifted a cry:
Follow me! Sa-sa-kuon! Swifter and swifter they swirled —
And the flood of their doom went flying,
Flying away to the darkness,
Follow me, follow me, Mohawks, ye are shooting the edge of the world.

They struggled like snakes to return. Like straws they were whirled on her track.
For the whole flood swooped to that edge where the unplumbed night dropt black,
The whole flood dropt to a thunder in an unplumbed hell beneath,
And over the gulf of the thunder
A mountain of spray from the darkness
Rose and stood in the heavens, like a shrouded image of death.

She rushed like a star before them. The moon on her glorying shone.
Teach me, O my lover,— her cry flashed out and was gone.

A moment they battled behind her. They lashed with their
paddles and lunged;
Then the Mohawks, turning their faces
Like a blood-stained cloud to the darkness,
Over the edge of Niagara swept together and plunged.

*And the lights of a hundred cities are fed by the ancient
power;*
*But a cry returns with the midnight; for they, too, have
their hour.*
Teach me, O my lover, as you taught me of love in a day,
— While the river of stars is rolling,
Rolling away to the darkness,—
Teach me of death, and for ever, and set my feet on the way!

A KNIGHT OF OLD JAPAN

Make me a stave of song, the Master said,
On yonder cherry-bough, whose white and red
Hangs in the sunset over those green seas.
The young knight looked upon his untried blade,
Then shrugged his wings of gold and blue brocade:
How should a warrior play with thoughts like these?

Fresh from the battle, in that self-same hour,
A mail-clad warrior watched each delicate flower
Close in that cloud of beauty against the West.
Drinking the last deep light, he watched it long.
He raised his face as if to pray. *The strong,*
The Master whispered, *are the tenderest.*

BEYOND DEATH

I

In lonely bays
Where Love runs wild,
All among the flowering grasses,
Where light, light, light, as a sea-bird's wing
The chuckle of the child-god passes,

O, to awake, to shake away the night
And find you dreaming there,
On the other side of death, with the sea-wind blowing round you,
And the scent of the thyme in your hair.

II

Tho' beauty perish,
Perish like a flower,
And song be an idle breath,
Tho' heaven be a dream, and youth for but an hour,
And life much less than death,
And the Maker less than that He made,
And hope less than despair,
If Death have shores where Love runs wild
I think you might be there.

III

Re-born, re-born
From the splendid sea,
There should you awake and sing,
With every supple sweet from the head to the feet
Modelled like a wood-dove's wing,—
O, to awake, to shake away the night,
And find you happy there,
On the other side of death, with the sea-wind blowing round you,
And the scent of the thyme in your hair.

THE STRANGE GUEST

You cannot leave a new house
With any open door,
But a strange guest will enter it
And never leave it more.

Build it on a waste land,
Dreary as a sin.

Leave her but a broken gate,
And beauty will come in.

Build it all of scarlet brick.
Work your wicked will.
Dump it on an ash-heap
Then — O then, be still.

Sit and watch your new house.
Leave an open door.
A strange guest will enter it
And never leave it more.

She will make your raw wood
Mellower than gold.
She will take your new lamps
And sell them for old.

She will crumble all your pride,
Break your folly down.
Much that you rejected
She will bless and crown.

She will rust your naked roof,
Split your pavement through,
Dip her brush in sun and moon
And colour it anew.

Leave her but a window
Wide to wind and rain,
You shall find her footsteps
When you come again.

Though she keep you waiting
Many months or years,
She will stain and make it
Beautiful with tears.

She shall hurt and heal it,
Soften it and save,
Blessing it, until it stand
Stronger than the grave.

You cannot leave a new house
With any open door,
But a strange guest will enter it
And never leave it more.

GHOSTS

O, to creep in by candle-light,
When all the world is fast asleep,
Out of the cold winds, out of the night,
Where the nettles wave and the rains weep!
O, to creep in, lifting the latch
So quietly that no soul could hear,
And, at those embers in the gloom,
Quietly light one careful match —
You should not hear it, have no fear —
And light the candle and look round
The old familiar room;
To see the old books upon the wall
And lovingly take one down again,
And hear — O, strange to those that lay
So patiently underground —
The ticking of the clock, the sound
Of clicking embers . . .
watch the play
Of shadows . . .
till the implacable call
Of morning turn our faces grey;
And, or ever we go, we lift and kiss
Some idle thing that your hands may touch,
Some paper or book that your hands let fall,
And we never — when living — had cared so much
As to glance upon twice . . .
But now, O bliss
To kiss and to cherish it, moaning our pain,
Ere we creep to the silence again.

THE DAY OF REMEMBRANCE

Dazzle of the sea, azure of the sky, glitter of the dew on the grass,
Pass to Oblivion
In the darkness
With all that ever is or ever was.

Yet, O flocks of cloud with your violet shadows, O white may crowding o'er the lane,
The Shepherd that drives you
To the darkness
Shall lead you thro' the crimson dawn again.

Bear your load of beauty to the sunset, and the golden gates of death.
The Eternal shall remember
In the darkness
And recall you at a word, at a breath.

Even as the mind of a man may remember his lost and linkless hours,
This world that is scattered
To the darkness
Dismembered and dis-petalled, clouds and flowers,

Cities, suns, and systems, as He said of old, they sleep! Not a bird, not a leaf shall pass by,
But on the day of remembrance
In the darkness,
In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye,

They shall flash to their places in the music of the whole, even as our father said!
For a Power shall remember
In the darkness,
And the universal sea give up her dead.

ON THE EMBANKMENT

Within, it was colour and laughter, warmth and wine.
  Without, it was darkness, hunger and bitter cold,
Where those white globes on the wet Embankment shine,
  Greasing the Thames with gold.

And was it a bundle of fog in the dark drew nigh?
  A bundle of rags and bones it crept to the light,—
A monstrous thing that coughed as it shuffled by,
  A shape of the shapeless night,

Spawned as brown things that mimic their mothering earth,
  Green creeping things that the grass lifts to the sun,
Out of its wrongs the City had brought to the birth
  The shape of those wrongs, in one.

A woman, a woman whose lips had once been kissed,
  (It was Christmas Eve, and the bells began their chime!)
She sank to a seat like a coughing bundle of mist
  Exhaled from the river-slime.

Bells for the birth of Christ! She heard, and she thought —
  Vacantly — of her man, that was long since dead,
The smell of the Christmas food, and the drink they had
      bought
  Together, the year they were wed.

She thought of their one-room home, and the night-long sigh
  Recalled, as he slept, of his breath in her loosened hair.
He slept. She opened her haggard eyes with a cry.
  But only the night was there.

No, out of the formless night, at her furtive glance,
  Crouched at the end of her cold wet bench, there grew
A bundle of fog, a bundle of rags that, perchance,
  Once was a woman, too.

A huddled shape, a fungus of foul grey mist
  Spawned of the river, in peace and much good-will,

And even the woman whose lips had once been kissed
Wondered, it crouched so still.

No breath, no shadow of breath in the lamp-light smoked,
It crouched so still — that bunch at the bench's end.
She stretched her neck like a crow, then leaned and croaked,
"A Merry Christmas, friend!"

She rose, and peered, peered at its vacant eyes.
Touched its cold claws. Its arms of knotted bone
Were wands of ice; like iron rods the thighs;
The left breast — like a stone.

Far, far along the rows of warmth and light
The Christmas waits, with cornet and bassoon,
Carolled "While shepherds watched their flocks by night."
The bells pealed to the moon.

A bundle of rags and bones, a bundle of mist,
And never a hell or heaven to hear or see,
The woman, the woman whose lips had once been kissed,
Knelt down feverishly.

She plucked the shawl out of that frozen clutch.
The dead are dead. Why should the living freeze?
She touched the cold flesh that she feared to touch
Kneeling upon her knees.

Her palsied hands unlaced the shoes — good shoes! —
She tore them quick from the crooked yellow feet.
If Death be generous, why should Life refuse
To take, and pawn, and eat?

A heavy step drew nearer thro' the mist.
She bundled them into the shawl. Her eyes were bright.
The woman, the woman whose lips had once been kissed,
Slunk, chuckling, thro' the night.

THE IRON CROWN

Not memory of a vanished bliss,
  But suddenly to know,
I had forgotten! This, O this
  With iron crowned my woe:

To know that on some midnight sea
  Whence none could lift the pall
A drowning hand was waved to me,
  Then — swept beyond recall.

THE OLD DEBATE

His angels fell, and myriads grope
  In doubt, for this dark cause alone,—
That God has given them room for hope,
  And made their struggling wills their own.

In the same breath, they plead for chains
  And freedom; pray for ordered spheres,
Then murmur that the sun maintains
  Its course, unchecked by smiles or tears.

"The Omnipotent would grant us this,
  Or else He is not good," they say;
But O, the Power withholds their bliss
  Till they agree what prayer to pray.

A SONG OF HOPE

Not in those eyes, too kind for truth,
  Which dare not note how beauties wane;
Nor in that crueller joy of youth
  Which turns from sorrow with disdain;
    No — no — not there,
  Abides the hope that answers our despair.

Lie where they hid your dead away.
Knock on that unrelenting door;
Then break, O desolate heart, and say
Farewell, farewell, for evermore . . .
There, only there,
Abides the hope that conquers all despair.

The silence that refused to bless
Till grief had turned the heart to stone . . .
What soul compact of nothingness
Could hear so fierce a trumpet blown?
Then hear, O hear,
The dreadful hope that equals all despair.

There, till the deep atoning Might
Shall answer all that each can pray,
The very boundlessness of night
Proclaims — and waits — an equal day.
There, only there,
— *But O, sing low, sweet strings, lest hope take wing!* —
Abides the hope that answers all despair.

THE HEDGE-ROSE OPENS

How passionately it opens after rain,
And O, how like a prayer
To those great shining skies! Do they disdain
A bride so small and fair?
See the imploring petals, how they part
And utterly lay bare
The perishing treasures of that piteous heart
In wild surrender there.
What? Would'st *thou,* too, drink up the Eternal bliss,
Ecstatically dare,
O, little bride of God, to invoke *His* kiss? —
But O, how like a prayer!

THE MAY-TREE

The May-tree on the hill
  Stands in the night
So fragrant and so still,
  So dusky white.

That, stealing from the wood
  In that sweet air,
You'd think Diana stood
  Before you there.

If it be so, her bloom
  Trembles with bliss.
She waits across the gloom
  Her shepherd's kiss.

Touch her. A bird will start
  From those pure snows,—
The dark and fluttering heart
  Endymion knows.

OLD LETTERS

Read them? Strangle that sick cry?
  Christ God, no!
Shut the box. Lock the lid.
  You'll be safer — so.
Could you read one crookéd word
  Scrawled so long ago,
Love would rise before your face
  And blind you, like a blow.

Close it! Quickly! For I caught,
  In a childish hand,
Something that she never thought
  I should understand.

So I crouch. And shall our God
  Prove Him baser yet,
He who filled her eyes with light
  Quite renounce His debt,
Give her worlds to love, and then —
  Ere the sun be set,
Strike her down and coffin all?
  Christ, shall *He* forget?

Close it! Quickly! For I caught,
  In a childish hand,
Something that she never thought
  I should understand.

LAMPS

Immense and silent night,
  Over the lonely downs I go;
And the deep gloom is pricked with points of light
  Above me and below.

I cannot break the bars
  Of Time and Fate; and if I scan the sky,
There comes to me, questioning those cold stars,
  No signal, no reply.

Yet are they less than these —
  These village-lights, which I do scan
Below me, or far out on darkling seas
  Those messages from man?

Round me the darkness rolls.
  Out of the depth, each lance of light
Shoots from lost lanthorns, thrills from living souls,
  And shall I doubt the height?

No signal? No reply?
  As through the deepening night I roam,
Hope opens all her casements in the sky
  And lights the lamps of home.

AT EDEN GATES

To Eden Garden — so the sign-post said;
I could not see the road;
But, where the Sussex clover blossomed red
Its runaway blisses flowed.

I traced them back for many a night and day,
— The way she, too, had gone! —
Till lo, the terrible Angel in the way
Inexorably shone.

Up to the Gates, a fearless fool I came;
Between the lily and rose
Fluttering these evil rags of sordid shame,
A thing to scare the crows.

"And hath the Master given thee, then, no word?"
The scornful Angel smiled:
"Only two souls may pass my Flaming Sword,—
The Lover and the Child."

I raised my head,—"Then let all hell make mirth,
Where Love went, I go, too!"
His eyes met mine. The sword sank to the earth,
And let her lover through.

THE PSYCHE OF OUR DAY

As constant lovers may rejoice
With seas between, with worlds between,
Because a fragrance and a voice
Are round them everywhere:
So let me travel to the grave,
Believing still — for I have seen —
That Love's triumphant banners wave
Beyond my own despair.

I have no trust in my own worth;
  Yet have I faith, O love, for you,
That every beauty in bloom or leaf,
  That even age and wrong
May touch, may hurt you, on this earth,
  But only, only as kisses do;
Or as the fretted string of grief
  Completes the bliss of song;

That you shall see, on any grave
  The snow fall, like that unseen hand
Which O, so often, pressed your hair
  To cherish and console;
That seas may roar and winds rave
  But you shall feel and understand
What vast caresses everywhere
  Convey you to the goal.

So was it always in the years
  When Love began, when Love began
With eyes that were not touched of tears
  And lips that still could sing —
And all around us, in the may,
  The child-god with his laughter ran,
And every bloom, on every spray,
  Betrayed his fluttering wing.

So hold it, keep it, count it, sweet,
  Until the end, until the end.
It is not cruelty, but bliss
  That pains and is so fond:
Crush life like thyme beneath your feet,
  And O, my love, when that strange friend,
The Shadow of Wings, which men call Death,
  Shall close your eyes, with that last kiss,
Ask not His name. A rosier breath
  Shall waken you — beyond.

PARACLETE

Tongue hath not told it,
  Heart hath not known;
Yet shall the bough swing
  When it hath flown.

Dreams have denied it,
  Fools forsworn:
Yet it hath comforted
  Each man born.

Once and again it is
  Blown to me,
Sweet from the wild thyme,
  Salt from the sea;

Blown thro' the ferns
  Faint from the sky;
Shadowed in water,
  Yet clear as a cry.

Light on a face,
  Or touch of a hand,
Making my still heart
  Understand.

Earth hath not seen it.
  Nor heaven above,
Yet shall the wild bough
  Bend with the Dove.

Yea, tho' the bloom fall
  Under Thy feet,
Veni, Creator,
  Paraclete!

AFTER RAIN

Listen! On sweetening air
The blackbird growing bold
Flings out, where green boughs glisten,
Three splashes of wild gold.

Daughter of April, hear;
And hear, O barefoot boy!
That carol of wild sweet water
Has washed the world with joy.

Glisten, O fragrant earth
Assoiled by heaven anew,
And O, ye lovers, listen,
With eyes that glisten, too.

THE DEATH OF A GREAT MAN

No — not that he is dead. The pang's not there,
Nor in the City's many-coloured bloom
Of swift black-lettered posters, which the throng
Passes with bovine stare,
To say *He is dead* and *Is it going to rain?*
Or hum stray snatches of a rag-time song.
Nor is it in that falsest shibboleth
(Which orators toss to the dumb scorn of death)
That all the world stands weeping at his tomb.
London is dining, dancing, through it all.
And, in the unchecked smiles along the street
Where men, that slightly knew him, lightly meet,
With all the old indifferent grimaces,
There is no jot of grief, no tittle of pain.
No. No. For nearer things do most tears fall.
Grief is for near and little things. But pride,
O, pride was to be found by two or three,

And glory in his great battling memory,
  Prouder and purer than the loud world knows,
In one more dreadful sign, the day he died —
  The dreadful light upon a thousand faces,
The peace upon the faces of his foes.

THE ROMAN WAY

He that has loyally served the State
  Whereof he found himself a part,
Or spent his life-blood to create
  A kingdom's treasure in his art;

Who sees the enemies of his land
  Applauded, by her sects and schools;
And the high thought they scarce had scanned
  Derided and befogged by fools;

— Better to know it soon than late! —
  Struggling, he wins a meed of praise;
Achieving, he is dogged by hate
  And furtive malice all his days.

O, Emperor of the Stoic clan,
  Enfold him, then, with nobler pride.
Teach him that nought can hurt a man
  Who will not turn or stoop to chide.

Can falsehood kindle or bedim
  One bay-leaf in his quiet crown?
Ten thousand Lies may pluck at him,
  But only Truth can tear him down.

Why should he heed the thing they say?
  They never asked if it were true.
Why brush one scribbler's tale away
  For others to invent a new?

No, let him search his heart, secure
— If Truth be there — from tongue or pen;
And teach us, Emperor, to endure,
To think like Romans and like men.

THE INNER PASSION

THERE is a Master in my heart
To whom, though oft against my will,
I bring the songs I sing apart
And strive to think that they fulfil
His silent law, within my heart.

But He is blind to my desires,
And deaf to all that I would plead:
He tests my truth at purer fires
And shames my purple with His need.
He claims my deeds, not my desires.

And often when my comrades praise,
I sadden, for He turns from me!
But, sometimes, when they blame, I raise
Mine eyes to His, and in them see
A tenderness too deep for praise.

He is not to be bought with gold,
Or lured by thornless crowns of fame;
But when some rebel thought hath sold
Him to dishonour and to shame,
And my heart's Pilate cries, "Behold,"

"Behold the Man," I know Him then;
And all those wild thronged clamours die
In my heart's judgment hall again,
Or if it ring with "Crucify!"
Some few are faithful even then.

Some few sad thoughts,— one bears His cross;
To that dark Calvary of my pride;

One stands far off and mourns His loss,
And one poor thief on either side
Hangs on his own unworthy cross.

And one — O, truth in ancient guise! —
Rails, and one bids him cease alway,
And the God turns His hungering eyes
On that poor thought with, "Thou, this day,
Shalt sing, shalt sing, in Paradise."

A COUNTRY LANE IN HEAVEN

The exceeding weight of glory bowed
My head, in that pure clime:
I found a road that ran through cloud
Along the coasts of Time . . .

Out of that mist of years there came
A cross-barred gate of wood.
I clutched, I kissed the unheavenly frame
So hard, it trickled blood.

My head upon the iron lay.
I slobbered blood and foam.
Yea, like a dog, I knew the way,
A hundred yards from home.

Iron and blood and wood! They knew
The secret of that cry
When the Eternal Passion drew
Their Maker through — to die.

I knew each little hawthorn-cloud
Along my misty lane,
Then my heart burst. She sobbed aloud,
Between my arms again.

TO THE DESTROYERS

Yes. You have shattered many an ancient wrong,
And we were with you, heart and mind and soul,
But there are fools who cast away control
In life and thought and art; because the strong —
We dare to say it — have now destroyed so long,
That careless minds forget the unchanging goal —
The nobler order which shall make us whole,
The service which is freedom, beauty, song.

We shall be stoned as traitors to your cause
While the real traitors that you did not know,
Chaos and Vice, trumpet themselves as free.
Pray God that, loyal to the eternal laws,
A little remnant, mauled by friend and foe,
Save you through Truth, and bring you Liberty.

THE TRUMPET-CALL

I

Trumpeter, sound the great recall!
Swift, O swift, for the squadrons break,
The long lines waver, mazed in the gloom!
Hither and thither the blind host blunders.
Stand thou firm for a dead Man's sake,
Firm where the ranks reel down to their doom,
Stand thou firm in the midst of the thunders,
Stand where the steeds and the riders fall,
Set the bronze to thy lips and sound
A rally to ring the whole world round.
Trumpeter, rally us, rally us, rally us!
Sound the great recall.

II

Trumpeter, sound for the ancient heights!
Clouds of the earth-born battle cloak
The heaven that our fathers held from of old;

And we — shall we prate to their sons of the gain
In gold or bread? Through yonder smoke
The heights that never were won with gold
Wait, still bright with their old red stain,
For the thousand chariots of God again,
And the steel that swept thro' a hundred fights
With the Ironsides, equal to life and death,
The steel, the steel of their ancient faith.
Trumpeter, rally us, rally us, rally us!
Sound for the sun-lit heights.

III

Trumpeter, sound for the faith again!
Blind and deaf with the dust and the blood,
Clashing together we know not whither
The tides of the battle would have us advance.
Stand thou firm in the crimson flood,
Send the lightning of thy great cry
Through the thunders, athwart the storm,
Sound till the trumpets of God reply
From the heights we have lost in the steadfast sky,
From the Strength we despised and rejected.
Then,
Locking the ranks as they form and form,
Lift us forward, banner and lance,
Mailed in the faith of Cromwell's men,
When from their burning hearts they hurled
The gage of heaven against the world!
Trumpeter, rally us, rally us, rally us,
Up to the heights again.

IV

Trumpeter, sound for the last Crusade!
Sound for the fire of the red-cross kings,
Sound for the passion, the splendour, the pity
That swept the world for a dead Man's sake;
Sound, till the answering trumpet rings
Clear from the heights of the holy City,
Sound till the lions of England awake,

Sound for the tomb that our lives have betrayed;
O'er broken shrine and abandoned wall,
Trumpeter, sound the great recall,
Trumpeter, rally us, rally us, rally us;
Sound for the last Crusade!

V

Trumpeter, sound for the splendour of God!
Sound the music whose name is law,
Whose service is perfect freedom still,
The order august that rules the stars.
Bid the anarchs of night withdraw,
Too long the destroyers have worked their will,
Sound for the last, the last of the wars.
Sound for the heights that our fathers trod,
When truth was truth and love was love,
With a hell beneath, but a heaven above,
Trumpeter, rally us, up to the heights of it!
Sound for the City of God.

THE HEART OF CANADA

JULY, 1912

Because her heart is all too proud
— *Canada! Canada! fair young Canada* —
To breathe the might of her love aloud,
Be quick, O Motherland!
Because her soul is wholly free
— *Canada kneels, thy daughter, Canada* —
England, look in her eyes and see,
Honour and understand.

Because her pride at thy masthead shines,
— *Canada! Canada!* — queenly Canada
Bows with all her breathing pines,
All her fragrant firs.
Because our isle is little and old
— *Canada! Canada!* — young-eyed Canada

Gives thee, Mother, her hands to hold,
And makes thy glory hers.

Because thy Fleet is hers for aye,
— *Canada! Canada!* —clear-souled Canada,
Ere the war-cloud roll this way,
Bids the world beware.
Her heart, her soul, her sword are thine
— *Thine the guns, the guns of Canada!* —
The ships are foaming into line,
And Canada will be there.

THE RETURN OF THE HOME-BORN

All along the white chalk coast
The mist lifts clear.
Wight is glimmering like a ghost.
The ship draws near.
Little inch-wide meadows
Lost so many a day,
The first time I knew you
Was when I turned away.

Island — little island —
Lost so many a year,
Mother of all I leave behind
— *Draw me near!* —
Mother of half the rolling world,
And O, so little and gray,
The first time I found you
Was when I turned away.

Over yon green water
Sussex lies.
But the slow mists gather
In our eyes.
England, little island
— God, how dear! —
Fold me in your mighty arms,
Draw me near.

Little tawny roofs of home,
Nestling in the gray,
Where the smell of Sussex loam
Blows across the bay . . .
Fold me, teach me, draw me close,
Lest in death I say
The first time I loved you
Was when I turned away.

A SALUTE FROM THE FLEET

I

The Guns of H.M.S. Royal Sovereign

Ocean-mother of England, thine is the crowning acclaim.
Here, in the morning of battle, from over the world and beyond,
Here, by our fleets of steel, silently foam into line
Fleets of our glorious dead, thy shadowy oak-walled ships.
Mother, for O, thy soul must speak thro' our iron lips!
How should we speak to the ages, unless with a word of thine?
Utter it, Victory! Let thy great signal flash thro' the flame!
Answer, *Bellerophon, Marlborough, Thunderer, Condor,* respond!

II

The Guns of H.M.S. Majestic

Out of the ages we speak unto you, O ye ages to be.
Rocks of Sevastopol, echo our thunder-word, bruit it afar.
Roll it, O Mediterranean, round by Gibraltar again.
Buffet it, Porto Bello, back to the Nile once more.
Answer it, great St. Vincent! Answer it, Elsinore,
Buffet it back from your crags and roll it over the main!
Heights of Quebec, O hear and re-echo it back to the Baltic Sea!
Answer it, *Camperdown!* Answer it, answer it, *Trafalgar!*

III

The Guns of H.M.S. Rainbow

How should we speak to the ages, if not with a word of thine,
Maker of cloud and harvest, foam and the sea-bird's wing,
Ocean-Mother of England and all things living and free?
Deep that wast moved by the Spirit to bloom with the first white morn,
Mother of Light and Freedom, mother of hopes unborn,
Speak, O world-wide welder of nations, O Soul of the sea!
Thine was the watchword that called us of old o'er the gray sky-line:
Lift thy stormy salute. It is freedom and peace that we bring.

IV

The Guns of H.M.S. Victory

Therefore on thee we call, O Mother, for we are thy sons.
Speak, with thy world-wide voice, O wake us anew from our sleep!
Speak, for the Light of the world still lives and grows on thy face.
Give us the ancient Word once more, the unchangeable Word,—
This that Nelson knew, this that Effingham heard,
This that resounds for ever in all the hearts of our race,
This that lives for a moment on the iron lips of our guns,
This — that echoes for ever and ever — the Word of the Deep.

V

The Guns of H.M.S. Dreadnought

How shall a king be saved by the multitude of an host?
Was not the answer thine, when fleet upon fleet swept, hurled

Blind thro' the dark North Sea, with all their invincible ships?
Thine was the answer, O mother of all men born to be free!
Witness again, Cape Wrath! — O thine, everlastingly,
Thine as Freedom arose and rolled thy song from her lips,
Thine when she 'stablished her throne in thy sight, on our rough rock-coast,
Thine with thy lustral glory and thunder, washing the world.

VI

The Guns of H.M.S. Temeraire

O for that ancient cry of the watch at the midnight bell,
Under the unknown stars, from the decks that Frobisher trod.
Hark, *Before the world?* — he questions a fleet in the dark!
Answer it, friend or foe! And, ringing from mast to mast,
Mother, hast thou forgotten what cry in the dark went past,
Answering still as he questioned? *Before the world?* O, hark,
Ringing anear, *Before the world? . . . was God . . .* All's well!
Dying afar . . . *Before the world? . . .* All's well . . . *was God!*

VII

The Guns of H.M.S. Revenge

Raleigh and Grenville heard it, Knights of the Ocean-sea.
Have we forgotten it only, we with our leagues of steel?
Give us our watchword again, O mother, in this great hour!
Here, in the morning of battle, here as we gather our might,
Here, as the nations of earth in the light of thy freedom unite,
Shake our hearts with thy Word, O 'stablish our peace on thy power!

'Stablish our power on thy peace, thy glory, thy liberty.
'Stablish on thy deep Word the throne of our Commonweal.

VIII

The Guns of H.M.S. Leviathan

They that go down to the sea in ships — they heard it of old —
They shall behold His wonders, alone on the Deep, the Deep!
Have *we* forgotten, we only? O, rend the heavens again,
Voice of the Everlasting, shake the great hills with thy breath!
Roll the Voice of our God thro' the valleys of doubt and death!
Waken the fog-bound cities with the shout of the wind-swept main,
Inland over the smouldering plains, till the mists unfold,
Darkness die, and England, England arise from sleep.

IX

The Guns of H.M.S. Triumph

Queen of the North and the South, Queen of our ocean-renown,
England, England, England, O lift thine eyes to the sun!
Wake, for the hope of the whole world yearns to thee, watches and waits!
Now on the full flood-tide of the ages, the supreme hour
Beacons thee onward in might to the purpose and crown of thy power.
Hark, for the whole Atlantic thunders against thy gates,
Take the Crown of all Time, all might, earth's crowning Crown,
Throne thy children in peace and in freedom together,
O weld them in one.

X

The Guns of the Fleet

Throne them in triumph together. Thine is the crowning cry!
Thine the glory for ever in the nation born of thy womb!
Thine the Sword and the Shield, and the shout that Salamis heard,
Surging in Æschylean splendour, earth-shaking acclaim!
Ocean-mother of England, thine is the throne of her fame.
Breaker of many fleets, O thine the victorious word,
Thine the Sun and the Freedom, the God and the wind-swept sky,
Thine the thunder and thine the lightning, thine the doom.

IN MEMORY OF A BRITISH AVIATOR

On those young brows that knew no fear
We lay the Roman athlete's crown,
The laurel of the charioteer,
The imperial garland of renown,
While those young eyes, beyond the sun,
See Drake, see Raleigh, smile "Well done."

Their desert seas that knew no shore
To-night with fleets like cities flare;
But, frailer even than theirs of yore,
His keel a new-found deep would dare:
They watch, with thrice-experienced eyes
What fleets shall follow through the skies.

They would not scoff, though man should set
To feebler wings a mightier task.
They know what wonders wait us yet.
Not all things in an hour they ask;
But in each noble failure see
The inevitable victory.

A thousand years have borne us far
From that dark isle the Saxon swayed,
And star whispers to trembling star
While Space and Time shrink back afraid,—
"Ten thousand thousand years remain
For man to dare our deep again."

Thou, too, shalt hear across that deep
Our thundering fleets of thought draw nigh,
Round which the suns and system sweep
Like cloven foam from sky to sky,
Till Death himself at last restore
His captives to our eyes once more.
. . . . . .
Feeble the wings, dauntless the soul!
Take thou the conqueror's laurel crown;
Take — for thy chariot grazed the goal —
The imperial garland of renown;
While those young eyes, beyond the sun,
See Drake, see Raleigh, smile "Well done."

THE WAGGON

Crimson and black on the sky, a waggon of clover
Slowly goes rumbling, over the white chalk road;
And I lie in the golden grass there, wondering why
So little a thing
As the jingle and ring of the harness,
The hot creak of leather,
The peace of the plodding,
Should suddenly, stabbingly, make it
Strange that men die.

Only, perhaps, in the same blue summer weather,
Hundreds of years ago, in this field where I lie,
Cædmon, the Saxon, was caught by the self-same thing:
The serf lying, dark with the sun, on his beautiful wain-load,
The jingle and clink of the harness,

The hot creak of leather,
The peace of the plodding;
And wondered, O terribly wondered,
That men must die.

THE WORLD'S WEDDING

"Et quid curae nobis de generibus et speciebus? Ex uno Verbo omnia, et unum loquuntur omnia. Cui omnia unum sunt, quique ad unum omnia trahit et omnia in uno videt, potest stabilis corde esse." — THOMAS À KEMPIS.

I

When poppies fired the nut-brown wheat,
My love went by with sun-stained feet;
I followed her laughter, followed her, followed her, all a summer's morn!
But O, from an elfin palace of air,
A wild bird sang a song so rare,
I stayed to listen and — lost my Fair,
And walked the world forlorn.

II

When chalk shone white between the sheaves,
My love went by as one that grieves;
I followed her weeping, followed her, followed her, all an autumn noon!
The sunset flamed so fierce a red
From North to South — I turned my head
To wonder — and my Fair was fled
Beyond the dawning moon.

III

When bare black boughs were choked with snow,
My love went by, as long ago;
I followed her dreaming, followed her, followed her, all a winter's night!
But O, along that snow-white track
With thorny shadows printed black,

I saw three kings come riding back,
And — lost my life's delight.

IV

They are so many, and she but One;
And I and she, like moon and sun
So separate ever! Ah yet, I follow her, follow her, faint and far;
For what if all this diverse bliss
Should run together in one kiss!
Swift, Spring, with the sweet clue I miss
Between these several instances,—
The kings, that inn, that star.

V

Between the hawk's and the wood-dove's wing,
My love, my love flashed by like Spring!
The year had finished its golden ring!
Earth, the Gipsy, and Heaven, the King,
Were married like notes in the song I sing,
And O, I followed her, followed her, followed her over the hills of Time,
Never to lose her now I know,
For whom the sun was clasped in snow,
The heights linked to the depths below,
The rose's flush to the planet's glow,
Death the friend to life the foe,
The Winter's joy to the Spring's woe,
And the world made one in a rhyme.

IN MEMORIAM

SAMUEL COLERIDGE-TAYLOR

Farewell! The soft mists of the sunset-sky
Slowly enfold his fading birch-canoe!
Farewell! His dark, his desolate forests cry,
Moved to their vast, their sorrowful depths anew.

3359

Fading! Nay, lifted thro' a heaven of light,
His proud sails brightening thro' that crimson flame,
Leaving us lonely on the shores of night,
Home to Ponemah take his youthful fame.

Generous as a child, so wholly free
From all base pride that fools forgot his crown,
He adored Beauty, in pure ecstasy,
And waived the mere rewards of his renown.

The spark that falls from heaven not oft on earth
To human hearts this vital splendour gives;
His was the simple, true, immortal birth.
Scholars compose; but — *this man's music lives!*

Greater than England or than Earth discerned,
He never paltered with his art for gain:
When many a vaunted crown to dust is turned,
This uncrowned king shall take his throne and reign.

Nations unborn shall hear his forests moan;
Ages unscanned shall hear his winds lament,
Hear the strange grief that deepened through his own
The vast cry of a buried continent.

Through him, his race a moment lifted up
Forests of hands to Beauty as in prayer;
Touched through his lips the sacramental Cup,
And then sank back — benumbed in our bleak air.

Through him, through him, a lost world hailed the light!
The tragedy of that triumph none can tell,—
So great, so brief, so quickly snatched from sight;
Yet, Hiawatha, hail, and not farewell!

. . . . . .

INSCRIPTION

(FOR THE GRAVE OF COLERIDGE-TAYLOR)

Sleep, crowned with fame; fearless of change or time.
Sleep, like remembered music in the soul,
Silent, immortal; while our discords climb
To that great chord which shall resolve the whole.

Silent with Mozart on that solemn shore;
Secure where neither waves nor hearts can break;
Sleep — till the Master of the World, once more,
Touch the remembered strings, and bid thee wake . . .

Touch the remembered strings, and bid thee wake.

VALUES

The moon that sways the rhythmic seas,
The wheeling earth, the marching sky,—
I ask not whence the order came
That moves them all as one.

These are your chariots. Nor shall these
Appal me with immensity;
I know they carry one heart of flame
More precious than the sun.

THE HEROIC DEAD

(ON THE LOSS OF THE TITANIC)

If in the noon they doubted, in the night
They never swerved. Death had no power to appal.
There was one Way, one Truth, one Life, one Light,
One Love that shone triumphant over all.

If in the noon they doubted, at the last
There was no Way to Part, no Way but One

That rolled the waves of Nature back and cast
In ancient days a shadow across the sun.

If in the noon they doubted, their last breath
Saluted once again the eternal goal,
Chanted a love-song in the face of Death
And rent the veil of darkness from the soul.

If in the noon they doubted, in the night
They waved the shadowy world of strife aside,
Flooded high heaven with an immortal light,
And taught the deep how its Creator died.

THE CRY IN THE NIGHT

It tears at the heart in the night, that moan of the wind,
That desolate moan.
It is worse than the cry of a child. I can hardly bear
To hear it, alone.

It is worse than the sobbing of love, when love is estranged:
For this is a cry
Out of the desolate ages. It never has changed.
It never can die.

A cry over numberless graves, dark, helpless and blind,
From the measureless past,
To the measureless future, a sobbing before the first laughter,
And after the last!
. . . . . .
From the height of creation, in passion eternal, the Word
Rushes forth, the loud cry,
Forsaken! Forsaken! It cuts through the night like a sword!
Shall it win no reply?

Not of earth is that height of all sorrow, past time, out of space,
Therefore here, here and now,
Universal, a Calvary, crowned with Thy passionate face,
Thy thorn-wounded brow.

Ah, could I shrink if Thy heart for each heart upon earth
Must break like a sea?
Could I hear, could I bear it at all, if I were not a part
Of this labour in Thee?

Shall I accuse Thee, then? No, I account it my own,
All the grief I can bear,
On Thy Cross of Creation, to balance earth's bliss and atone,
Atone for life there.

If this be the One Way for ever, which not Thine all-might
Could change, if it would,
Till the truth be untrue, till the dark be the same as the light,
And till evil be good,

Shall I who took part in Thine April, shrink now from my part
In Thine anguish to be?
If Thy goal be the One goal of all, shall not even man's heart
Endure, this, with Thee;

Die with Thee, balancing life, or help Thee to pay
For our hope with our pain? . . .
O, the voice of the wind in the night!..Is it day, then, broad day,
On the blind earth again?

ASTRID

(AN EXPERIMENT IN INITIAL RHYMES)

White-armed Astrid,— ah, but she was beautiful! —
Nightly wandered weeping thro' the ferns in the moon,
Slowly, weaving her strange garland in the forest,
Crowned with white violets,
Gowned in green.
Holy was that glen where she glided,
Making her wild garland as Merlin had bidden her,
Breaking off the milk-white horns of the honeysuckle,
Sweetly dripped the dew upon her small white
Feet.

White-throated Astrid,—ah, but she was beautiful!—
Nightly sought the answer to that riddle in the moon.
She must weave her garland, ere she save her soul.
Three long years she has wandered there in vain.
Always, always, the blossom that would finish it
Falls to her feet, and the garland breaks and vanishes,
Breaks like a dream in the dawn when the dreamer
Wakes.

White-bosomed Astrid,—ah, but she was beautiful!—
Nightly tastes the sorrow of the world in the moon.
Will it be this little white miracle, she wonders.
How shall she know it, the star that will save her?
Still, ah still, in the moonlight she crouches
Bowing her head, for the garland has crumbled!
All the wild petals for the thousand and second time
Fall.

White-footed Astrid,—ah, but she is beautiful!—
Nightly seeks the secret of the world in the moon.
She will find the secret. She will find the golden
Key to the riddle, on the night when she has numbered
them,
Marshalled all her wild flowers, ordered them as music,
Star by star, note by note, changing them and ranging them,
Suddenly, as at a kiss, all will flash together,
Flooding like the dawn thro' the arches of the woodland,
Fern and thyme and violet, maiden-hair and primrose
Turn to the Rose of the World, and He shall fold her,
Kiss her on the mouth, saying, all the world is one now,
This is the secret of the music that the soul hears,—
This.

THE INIMITABLE LOVERS

They tell this proud tale of the Queen — Cleopatra,
Subtlest of women that the world has ever seen,
How that, on the night when she parted with her lover
Anthony, tearless, dry-throated, and sick-hearted,
A strange thing befell them in the darkness where they
stood.

Bitter as blood was that darkness.
And they stood in a deep window, looking to the west.
Her white breast was brighter than the moon upon the sea,
And it moved in her agony (because it was the end!)
Like a deep sea, where many had been drowned.
Proud ships that were crowned with an Emperor's eagles
Were sunken there forgotten, with their emeralds and gold.
They had drunken of that glory, and their tale was told, utterly,
Told.

There, as they parted, heart from heart, mouth from mouth,
They stared upon each other. They listened.
For the South-wind
Brought them a rumour from afar; and she said,
Lifting her head, too beautiful for anguish,
Too proud for pity,—
It is the gods that leave the City! O, Anthony,
Anthony, the gods have forsaken us;
Because it is the end! They leave us to our doom.
Hear it! And unshaken in the darkness,
Dull as dropping earth upon a tomb in the distance,
They heard, as when across a wood a low wind comes,
A muttering of drums, drawing nearer,
Then louder and clearer, as when a trumpet sings
To battle, it came rushing on the wings of the wind,
A sound of sacked cities, a sound of lamentation,
A cry of desolation, as when a conquered nation
Is weeping in the darkness, because its tale is told;
And then — a sound of chariots that rolled thro' that sorrow
Trampled like a storm of wild stallions, tossing nearer,
Trampled louder, clearer, triumphantly as music,
Till lo! in that great darkness, along that vacant street,
A red light beat like a furnace on the walls,
Then — like the blast when the North-wind calls to battle,
Blaring thro' the blood-red tumult and the flame,
Shaking the proud City as they came, an hundred elephants,
Cream-white and bronze, and splashed with bitter crimson,
Trumpeting for battle as they trod, an hundred elephants,

Bronze and cream-white, and trapped with gold and purple,
Towered like tuskéd castles, every thunder-laden footfall
Dreadful as the shattering of a City. Yet they trod,
Rocking like an earthquake, to a great triumphant music,
And, swinging like the stars, black planets, white moons,
Thro' the stream of the torches, they brought the red chariot,
The chariot of the battle-god — Mars.
While the tall spears of Sparta tossed clashing in his train,
And a host of ghostly warriors cried aloud
All hail! to those twain, and went rushing to the darkness
Like a pageantry of cloud, for their tale was told — utterly —
Told.

And following, in the fury of the vine, rushing down
Like a many-visaged torrent, with ivy-rod and thyrse,
And many a wild and foaming crown of roses,
Crowded the Bacchanals, the brown-limbed shepherds,
The red-tongued leopards, and the glory of the god!
Iacchus! Iacchus! without dance, without song,
They cried and swept along to the darkness.
Only for a breath when the tumult of their torches
Crimsoned the deep window where that dark warrior stood
With the blood upon his mail, and the Queen — Cleopatra,
Frozen to white marble — the Mænads raised their timbrels,
Tossed their white arms, with a clash — *All hail!*
Like wild swimmers, pale, in a sea of blood and wine,
All hail! All hail!..Then they swept into the darkness
And the darkness buried them. Their tale was told — utterly —
Told.

And following them, O softer than the moon upon the sea,
Aphrodite, implacably, shone.
Like a furnace of white roses, Aphrodite and her train
Lifted their white arms to those twain in the silence
Once, and were gone into the darkness;
Once, and away into the darkness they were swept
Like a pageantry of cloud, without praise, without pity.
Then the dark City slept. And the Queen — Cleopatra —

Subtlest of women that this earth has ever seen,
  Turning to her lover in the darkness where he stood,
With the blood upon his mail,
  Bowing her head upon that iron in the darkness,
  Wept.

THE CRAGS

(IN MEMORY OF THOMAS BAILEY ALDRICH)

Falernian, first! What other wine
Should brim the cup or tint the line
  That would recall my days
  Among your creeks and bays;

Where, founded on a rock, your house
Between the pines' unfading boughs
  Watches through sun and rain
  That lonelier coast of Maine;

And the Atlantic's mounded blue
Breaks on your crags the summer through,
  A long pine's length below,
  In rainbow-tossing snow.

While on your railed verandah there
As on a deck you sail through air,
  And sea and cloud and sky
  Go softly streaming by.

Like delicate oils at set of sun
Smoothing the waves the colours run —
  Around the enchanted hull,
  Anchored and beautiful,—

Restoring to that sun-dried star
You brought from coral isles afar —
  With shells that mock the moon —
  The tints of their lagoon;

Till, from within, your lamps declare
  Your harbours by the colours there,

An Indian god, a fan
Painted in Old Japan.

But, best of all, I think at night,
The moon that makes a road of light
Across the whispering sea,
A road — for memory.

When the blue dusk has filled the pane,
And the great pine-logs burn again,
And books are good to read.
— For his were books indeed.—

Their silken shadows, rustling, dim,
May sing no more of Spain for him;
No shadows of old France
Renew their courtly dance.

He walks no more where shadows are
But left their ivory gates ajar,
That shadows might prolong
The dance, the tale, the song.

His was no narrow test or rule.
He chose the best of every school,—
Stendhal and Keats and Donne
Balzac and Stevenson;

Wordsworth and Flaubert filled their place.
Dumas met Hawthorne face to face.
There were both new and old
In his good realm of gold.

The title-pages bore his name;
And, nightly, by the dancing flame,
Following him, I found
That all was haunted ground;

Until a friendlier shadow fell
Upon the leaves he loved so well,
And I no longer read,
But talked with him instead.

THE GHOST OF SHAKESPEARE

1914

Crimson was the twilight, under that crab-tree,
Where — old tales tell us — all a midsummer's night,
A mad young poacher, drunk with mead of elfin-land,
Lodged with the fern-owl, and looked at the stars.

There, from the dusk where the dream of Piers Plowman
Darkens on the sunset, to this dusk of our own,
I read, in a history, the record of our world.

The hawk-moth, the currant-moth, the red-striped tiger-moth
Shimmered all around me, so white shone those pages;
And, in among the blue boughs, the bats flew low.

I slumbered, the history slipped from my hand.
Then I saw a dead man, dreadful in the moon-dawn,
The ghost of the master, bowed upon that book.
He muttered as he searched it,— *what vast convulsion*
Mocks my sexton's curse now, shakes our English clay?
Whereupon I told him, and asked him in turn
Whether he espied any light in those pages
Which painted an epoch later than his own.
I am a shadow, he said, *and I see none . . .*

I am a shadow, he said, *and I see none.*

Then, O then he murmured to himself (while the moon hung
Crimson as a lanthorn of Cathay in that crab-tree),
Laughing at his work and the world, as I thought,
Yet with some bitterness, yet with some beauty,
Mocking his own music, these wraiths of his rhymes:

I

God, when I turn the leaves of that dark book
  Wherein our wisest teach us to recall
Those glorious flags which in old tempests shook
  And those proud thrones which held my youth in thrall;

When I see clear what seemed to childish eyes
The gorgeous colouring of each pictured age;
And for their dominant tints now recognise
Those prints of innocent blood on every page;

O, then I know this world is fast asleep,
Bound in Time's womb, till some far morning break;
And, though light grows upon the dreadful deep,
We are dungeoned in thick night. We are not awake.

The world's unborn, for all our hopes and schemes;
And all its myriads only move in dreams.

II

Read what our wisest chroniclers record: —
A king betrayed both foes and friends to death,
Delivered his own country to the sword,
And lied, and lied, and lied to his last breath.

He died, the martyred anarch of his time.
What balm is this that consecrates his dust?
The self-same history shudders at the "crime"
Which shed a blood so fragrant, so "august."

Yes. Let our sons by thousands, millions, die;
And when the crowned assassin of to-day
Stands in the Judgment Hall of Liberty
What shall your desolate nations rise and say?

Way for the vanquished murderer! He's a king!
So — for our dead — he's too "august" a thing.

III

It was a crimson twilight, under that crab-tree.
Moths beat about me, and bats flew low.
I read in a history, the record of our world.
If there be light, said the Master,
I am a shadow, and I see none . . .
I am a shadow, and I see none.

THE WHITE CLIFFS

Woden made the red cliffs, the red walls of England.
Round the South of Devonshire, they burn against the blue.
Green is the water there; and, clear as liquid sunlight,
Blue-green as mackerel, the bays that Raleigh knew.

Thor made the black cliffs, the battlements of England,
Climbing to Tintagel where the white gulls wheel.
Cold are the caverns there, and sullen as a cannon-mouth,
Booming back the grey swell that gleams like steel.

Balder made the white cliffs, the white shield of England
(Crowned with thyme and violet where Sussex wheatears fly),
White as the White Ensign are the bouldered heights of Dover,
Beautiful the scutcheon that they bare against the sky.

So the world shall sing of them — the white cliffs of England,
White, the glory of her sails, the banner of her pride.
One and all,— their seamen met and broke the dread Armada.
Only white may show the world the shield for which they died.

ON THE SOUTH COAST

Come away into the sun and see
All the heavens that used to be,
Daily, hourly, brought to birth
Out of the deep remembering earth.

This is England, this is the land
That holds my heart in her sweet hand.
This is she whose turf, I pray,
Will hide me, on her breast, one day.

Cast you down on the close-cropped turf,
See how the white cliff spreads the surf,
On green-eyed seas that glitter and trail
Into the south like a peacock's tail.

Then, come away over the hills of thyme,
Where folds like elfin belfries chime
Till Eve, in a cloud of her dusky hair,
Makes it Elf-land everywhere.

You shall pity the king on his throne.
You shall know what never was known.
All the glory of all the skies
Utterly yours in your true love's eyes;

All the bloom to the world's end
And all the heavens that over it bend,
Compacted in one garden white,
The garden of your love's delight.

This is England, this is the land
That holds my soul in her sweet hand.
This is she whose turf, I pray,
Will hide me on her heart one day.

OLDER THAN THE HILLS

Older than the hills, older than the sea,
  Older than the heart of the Spring,
O, what is that that breaks
From the blind shell, wakes,
  Wakes, and is gone like a wing?

Older than the sea, older than the moon,
  Older than the heart of the May,
What is this blind refrain
Of a song that shall remain
  When the singer is long gone away?

Older than the moon, older than the stars,
Older than the wind in the night,—
Though the young dews are sweet
On the heather at our feet
And the blue hills laughing back the light,—

Till the stars grow young, till the hills grow young,
O, Love, we shall walk through Time,
Till we round the world at last,
And the future be the past,
And the winds of Eden greet us from the prime.

THE TORCH

(SUSSEX LANDSCAPE)

Is it your watch-fire, elves, where the down with its darkening shoulder
Lifts on the death of the sun, out of the valley of thyme?
Dropt on the broad chalk path and, cresting the ridge of it, smoulder
Crimson as blood on the white, halting my feet as they climb,

Clusters of clover-bloom, spilled from what negligent arms in the tender
Dusk of the great grey world, last of the tints of the day;
Beautiful, sorrowful, strange, last stain of that perishing splendour.
Elves, from what torn white feet trickled that red on the way?

No — from the sun-burnt hands of what lovers that fade in the distance?
Here, was it here that they paused, here that the legend was told?
Even a kiss would be heard in this hush; but, with mocking insistence,
Now thro' the valley resound — only the bells of the fold.

Dropt — from the hands of what beautiful throng? Did they cry *"follow after"*?
Dancing into the west, leaving this token for me,
Memory dead on the path, and the sunset to bury their laughter?
Youth — is it youth that has flown? Darkness covers the sea.

Darkness covers the earth; but the path is here! I assay it.
Let the bloom fall like a flake — dropt from the torch of a friend!
Beautiful revellers, happy companions, I see and obey it;
Follow your torch in the night, follow your path to the end.

THE OUTLAW

Deep in the greenwood of my heart
My wild hounds race.
I cloak my soul at feast and mart,
I mask my face;

Outlawed, but not alone, for Truth
Is outlawed, too.
Proud world, you cannot banish us.
We banish *you.*

Go by, go by, with all your din,
Your dust, your greed, your guile,
Your gold, your thrones can never win —
From Her — one smile.

She sings to me in a lonely place,
She takes my hand.
I look into her lovely face
And understand. . . .

Outlawed, but not alone, for Love
Is outlawed, too.
You cannot banish us, proud world.
We banish *you.*

Now which is outlawed, which alone?
Around us fall and rise
Murmurs of leaf and fern, the moan
Of Paradise.

Outlawed? Then hills and woods and streams
Are outlawed, too!
Proud world, from our immortal dreams,
We banish you.

THE YOUNG FRIAR

When leaves broke out on the wild briar,
And bells for matins rung,
Sorrow came to the old friar
— Hundreds of years ago it was! —
And May came to the young.

The old was ripening for the sky,
The young was twenty-four.
The Franklin's daughter passed him by,
Reading a painted missal-book,
Beside the chapel door.

With brown cassock and sandalled feet,
And red Spring wine for blood;
The very next noon he chanced to meet
The Franklin's daughter, in a green May twilight,
Walking through the wood.

Pax vobiscum — to a maid
The crosiered ferns among!
But hers was only the Saxon,
And his the Norman tongue;
And the Latin taught by the old friar
Made music for the young.

And never a better deed was done
By Mother Church below

Than when she made old England one,
— Hundreds of years ago it was! —
Hundreds of years ago.

Rich was the painted page they read
Before that sunset died;
Nut-brown hood by golden head,
Murmuring *Rosa Mystica,*
While nesting thrushes cried.

A Saxon maid with flaxen hair,
And eyes of Sussex grey;
A young monk out of Normandy: —
"May is our Lady's month," he said,
"And O, my love, my May!"

Then over the fallen missal-book
The missel-thrushes sung
Till — *Domus Aurea* — rose the moon
And bells for vespers rung.
It was gold and blue for the old friar,
But hawthorn for the young.

For gown of green and brown hood,
Before that curfew tolled,
Had flown for ever through the wood
— Hundreds of years ago it was! —
But twenty summers old.

And empty stood his chapel stall,
Empty his thin grey cell,
Empty her seat in the Franklin's hall;
And there were swords that searched for them
Before the matin bell.

And, crowders tell, a sword that night
Wrought them an evil turn,
And that the may was not more white
Than those white bones the robin found
Among the roots of fern.

But others tell of stranger things
  Half-heard on Whitsun eves,
Of sweet and ghostly whisperings —
  Though hundreds of years ago it was —
Among the ghostly leaves: —

Sero te amavi —
  Grey eyes of sun-lit dew! —
Tam antiqua, tam nova —
  Augustine heard it, too.
Late have I loved that May, Lady,
  So ancient, and so new!

And no man knows where they were flown,
  For the wind takes the may:
But white and fresh the may was blown
  — Though hundreds of years ago it was —
As this that blooms to-day.

And the leaves break out on the wild briar,
  And bells must still be rung;
But sorrow comes to the old friar,
  For he remembers a May, a May,
When his old heart was young.

A FOREST SONG

Who would be a king
That can sit in the sun and sing?
Nay, I have a kingdom of mine own.
A fallen oak-tree is my throne.
  Then, pluck the strings, and tell me true
  If Cæsar in his glory knew
  The worlds he lost in sun and dew.

Who would be a queen
That sees what my love hath seen? —
The blood of little children shed
To make one royal ruby red!

Then, tell me, music, why the great
For quarrelling trumpets abdicate
This quick, this absolute estate.

Nay, who would sing in heaven,
Among the choral Seven
That hears — as Love and I have heard,
The whole sky listening to one bird?
And where's the ruby, tell me where,
Whose crimsons for one breath compare
With this wild rose that all may share?

THE TRUMPET OF THE LAW

(PHI BETA KAPPA POEM, HARVARD, 1915)

Music is dead. An age, an age is dying.
Shreds of Uranian song, wild symphonies
Tortured with moans of butchered innocents,
Blow past us on the wind. Chaos resumes
His kingdom. All the visions of the world,
The visions that were music, being shaped
By law, moving in measure, treading the road
That suns and systems tread, O who can hear
Their music now? Urania bows her head.
Only the feet that move in order dance.
Only the mind attuned to that dread pulse
Of law throughout the universe can sing.
Only the soul that plays its rhythmic part
In that great measure of the tides and suns
Terrestrial and celestial, till it soar
Into the absolute melodies of heaven,
Only that soul, climbing the splendid road
Of law from height to height, may walk with God,
Shape its own sphere from chaos, conquer death,
Lay hold on life and liberty, and sing.

Yet, since, at least, the fleshly heart must beat
In measure, and no new rebellion breaks
That old restriction, murmurs reach it still,

Rumours of that vast music which resolves
Our discords, and to this, to this attuned,
Though blindly, it responds, in notes like these:

There was a song in heaven of old,
A song the choral seven began,
When God with all his chariots rolled
The tides of chaos back for man;
When suns revolved and planets wheeled,
And the great oceans ebbed and flowed,
There is one way of life, it pealed,
The road of law, the unchanging road.

The trumpet of the law resounds,
And we behold, from depth to height,
What glittering sentries walk their rounds,
What ordered hosts patrol the night,
While wheeling worlds proclaim to us,
Captained by Thee thro' nights unknown,—
Glory that would be glorious
Must keep Thy law to find its own.

Beyond rebellion, past caprice,
From heavens that comprehend all change,
All space, all time, till time shall cease,
The trumpet rings to souls that range,
To souls that in wild dreams annul
Thy word, confessed by wood and stone,—
Beauty that would be beautiful
Must keep Thy law to find its own.

He that can shake it, will he thrust
His careless hands into the fire?
He that would break it, shall we trust
The sun to rise at his desire?
Constant above our discontent,
The trumpet peals in sterner tone,—
Might that would be omnipotent
Must keep Thy law to find its own.

Ah, though beneath unpitying spheres
Unreckoned seems our human cry,

In Thy deep law, beyond the years,
Abides the Eternal memory.
Thy law is light, to eyes grown dull
Dreaming of worlds like bubbles blown;
And Mercy that is merciful
Shall keep Thy law and find its own.

Unchanging God, by that one Light
Through which we grope to Truth and Thee,
Confound not yet our day with night,
Break not the measures of Thy sea.
Hear not, though grief for chaos cry
Or rail at Thine unanswering throne.
Thy law, Thy law, is liberty,
And in Thy law we find our own.

So, to Uranian music, rose our world.
The boughs put forth, the young leaves groped for light.
The wild flower spread its petals as in prayer.
Then, for terrestrial ears, vast discords rose,
The struggle in the jungle, clashing themes
That strove for mastery; but above them all,
Ever the mightier measure of the suns
Resolved them into broader harmonies,
That fought again for mastery. The night
Buried the mastodon. The warring tribes
Of men were merged in nations. Wider laws
Embraced them. Man no longer fought with man,
Though nation warred with nation. Hatred fell
Before the gaze of love. For in an hour
When, by the law of might, mankind could rise
No higher, into the deepening music stole
A loftier theme, a law that gathered all
The laws of earth into its broadening breast
And moved like one full river to the sea,
The law of Love.
The sun stood dark at noon;
Dark as the moon before that mightier Power,
And a Voice rang across the blood-stained earth:
I am the Way, the Truth, the Life, the Light.

We heard it, and we did not hear. In dreams
We caught a thousand fragments of the strain,
But never wholly heard it. We moved on
Obeying it a little, till our world
Became so vast, that we could only hear
Stray notes, a golden phrase, a sorrowful cry,
Never the rounded glory of the whole.
So one would sing of death, one of despair,
And some, knowing that God was more than man,
Knowing that the Eternal Power behind
Our universe was more than man, would shrink
From crowning Him with human attributes,
Though these remained the highest that we knew;
And therefore, falling back on lower signs,
Bereft of love, thought, personality,
They made Him less than man; made Him a blind
Unweeting force, less than the best in man,
Less than the best that He Himself had made.

Yet, though from earth we could no longer hear
As from a central throne, the harmonies
Of the revolving whole; yet though from earth,
And from earth's Calvary, the central scene
Withdrew to dreadful depths beyond our ken;
Withdrew to some deep Calvary at the heart
Of all creation; yet, O yet, we heard,
Echoes that murmured from Eternity,
I am the Way, the Truth, the Life, the Light.
And still the eternal passion undiscerned
Moved like a purple shadow through our world,
While we, in intellectual chaos, raised
The ancient cry, *Not this man, but Barabbas.*
Then Might grew Right once more, for who could hold
The Right, when the rebellious hearts of men
Finding the Law too hard in life, thought, art,
Proclaimed that Right itself was born of chance,
Born out of nothingness and doomed, at last,
To nothingness; while all that men have held
Better than dust — love, honour, justice, truth —
Was less than dust, for the blind dust endures?

But love, they said, and the proud soul of man,
Die with the breath, before the flesh decays.
And still, amidst the chaos, Love was born,
Suffered and died; and in a myriad forms
A myriad parables of the Eternal Christ
Unfolded their deep message to mankind.
So, on this last wild winter of his birth,
Though cannon rocked his cradle, heaven might
hear,
Once more, the Mother and her infant Child.

Will the Five Clock-Towers chime tonight?
— Child, the red earth would shake with scorn.—
But will the Emperors laugh outright
If Roland rings that Christ is born?

No belfries pealed for that pure birth.
There were no high-stalled choirs to sing.
The blood of children smoked on earth;
For Herod, in those days, was king.—

O, then the Mother and her Son
Were refugees that Christmas, too? —
Through all the ages, little one,
That strange old story still comes true.—

Was there no peace in Bethlehem —
Yes. There was Love in one poor Inn;
And, while His wings were over them,
They heard those deeper songs begin.—

What songs were they? What songs were they?
Did stars of shrapnel shed their light? —
O, little child, I have lost the way.
I cannot find that Inn tonight.—

Is there no peace, then, anywhere? —
Perhaps, where some poor soldier lies
With all his wounds in front, out there.—
You weep? — He had your innocent eyes.—

Then is it true that Christ's a slave,
Whom all these wrongs can never rouse? —
They said it. But His anger drave
The money-changers from His House.—

Yet He forgave and turned away.—
Yes, unto seventy times and seven.
But they forget. He comes one day
In power, among the clouds of heaven.—

Then Roland rings? — Yes, little son!
With iron hammers they dare not scorn,
Roland is breaking them, gun by gun,
Roland is ringing. Christ is born.

Born and re-born; for though the Christ we knew
On earth be dead for ever, who shall kill
The Eternal Christ whose law is in our hearts,
Christ, who in this dark hour descends to hell,
And ascends into heaven, and sits beside
The right hand of the Father. If for men
This law be dead, it lives for children still.
Children that men have butchered see His face,
Rest in His arms, and strike our mockery dumb.
So shall the trumpet of the law resound
Through all the ages, telling of the child
Whose outstretched arms in Belgium speak for God.

They crucified a Man of old,
The thorns are shrivelled on His brow.
Prophet or fool or God, behold,
They crucify Thy children now.
They doubted evil, doubted good,
And the eternal heavens as well,
Behold, the iron and the blood,
The visible handiwork of Hell.

Fast to the cross they found it there,
They found it in the village street,
A naked child, with sunkissed hair.
The nails were through its hands and feet.

For Christ was dead, yes, Christ was dead!
O Lamb of God, O little one,
I kneel before your cross instead
And the same shadow veils the sun. . . .

And the same shadow veils the sun. . . .

But you, O land, O beautiful land of Freedom,
Hold fast the faith which made and keeps you great.
With you, with you abide the faith and hope,
In this dark hour, of agonised mankind.
Hold to that law whereby the warring tribes
Were merged in nations, hold to that wide law
Which bids you merge the nations, here and now,
Into one people. Hold to that deep law
Whereby we reach the peace which is not death
But the triumphant harmony of Life,
Eternal Life, immortal Love, the Peace
Of worlds that sing around the throne of God.

THRICE-ARMED

(1914)

Thus only should it come, if come it must —
Not with a riot of flags and a mob-born cry,
But with a noble faith, a conscience high
That, if we fail, we failed not in our trust.
We fought for peace. We dared the bitter thrust
Of calumny for peace, and watched her die,
Her scutcheons rent from sky to outraged sky
By felon hands and trampled into the dust.

We proffered justice, and we saw the law
Cancelled by stroke on stroke of those deft hands
Which still retain the imperial forger's pen.
They must have blood — Then, at this last, we draw
The sword, not with a riot of flags and bands,
But silence, and a mustering of men.

They challenge Truth. A people makes reply,
East, West, North, South, one honour and one might.
From sea to sea, from height to war-worn height,
The old word rings out — to conquer or to die.
And we shall conquer! Though their eagles fly
Through heaven, around this ancient isle unite
Powers that were never vanquished in the fight,
The unconquerable Powers that cannot lie.

Though fire destroy her flesh, and many a year
This land forgot the faith that made her great,
Now, as her fleets cast off the North Sea foam,
Casting aside all faction and all fear,
Thrice-armed in all the majesty of her fate,
Britain remembers, and her sword strikes home.

THE SONG-TREE

Grow, my song, like a tree,
As thou hast ever grown,
Since first, a wondering child,
Long since, I cherished thee.
It was at break of day,
Well I remember it,—
The first note that I heard,
A magical undertone,
Sweeter than any bird
— Or so it seemed to me —
And my tears ran wild.
This tale, this tale is true.
The light was growing gray;
And the rhymes ran so sweet
(For I was only a child)
That I knelt down to pray.

Grow, my song, like a tree.
Since then I have forgot
A thousand dreams, but not
The song that set me free,
So that to thee I gave

My hopes and my despairs,
  My boyhood's ecstasy,
My manhood's prayers.
  In dreams I have watched thee grow,
A ladder of sweet boughs,
  Where angels come and go,
And birds keep house.
  In dreams, I have seen thee wave
Over a distant land,
  And watched thy roots expand,
And given my life to thee,
  As I would give my grave.

Grow, my song, like a tree,
  And when I am grown old,
Let me die under thee,
  Die to enrich thy mould;
Die at thy roots, and so
  Help thee to grow.
Make of this body and blood
  Thy sempiternal food.
Then let some little child,
  Some friend I shall not see,
When the great dawn is gray,
  Some lover I have not known,
In summers far away,
  Sit listening under thee.
And in thy rustling hear
  That mystical undertone,
Which made my tears run wild,
  And made thee, O, how dear.

In the great years to be?
  I am proud then? Ah, not so.
I have lived and died for thee.
  Be patient. Grow.
Grow, my song, like a tree.

THE WINE-PRESS

A TALE OF WAR

(FIRST PUBLISHED IN 1912)

DEDICATION

(TO THOSE WHO BELIEVE THAT PEACE IS THE CORRUPTER OF NATIONS)

I

Peace? When have we prayed for peace?
Over us burns a star
Bright, beautiful, red for strife!
Yours are only the drum and the fife
And the golden braid and the surface of life.
Ours is the white-hot war.

II

Peace? When have we prayed for peace?
Ours are the weapons of men.
Time changes the face of the world.
Your swords are rust! Your flags are furled
And ours are the unseen legions hurled
Up to the heights again.

III

Peace? When have we prayed for peace?
Is there no wrong to right?
Wrong crying to God on high
Here where the weak and the helpless die,
And the homeless hordes of the City go by,
The ranks are rallied to-night.

IV

Peace? When have we prayed for peace?
Are ye so dazed with words?
Earth, heaven, shall pass away
Ere for your passionless peace we pray.
Are ye deaf to the trumpets that call us to-day,
Blind to the blazing swords?

THE WINE-PRESS

I

A MURDERED man, ten miles away,
  Will hardly shake your peace,
Like one red stain upon your hand;
And a tortured child in a distant land
Will never check one smile to-day,
  Or bid one fiddle cease.

Not for a little news from hell
  Shall Europe strive or cry.
Tho' thought would shatter like dynamite
These granite hills that bury the right,
We must not think. We must not tell
  The truth for which men die.

To watch the mouth of a harlot foam
  For the blood of Baptist John
Is a fine thing while the fiddles play;
For blood and lust are the mode today,
And lust and blood were the mode of Rome,
  And we go where Rome has gone.

The plaudits round the circus roll!
  On the old track we swing.
"Unrest," we say, "is in the air";
And a flea is in the lap-dog's chair.
But the unrest that troubles the soul
  Is a more difficult thing.

Unrest that has no lot or part
  In anything but truth;
Unrest, unrest, whose passions draw
From founts of everlasting law,
Unrest that nerves the out-worn heart,
  And calls, like God, to youth;

The truth that tickles no sweet sense,
  The pillow of stone by night,
Unrest that no man's art can heal,
Unrest that girds the brain with steel,
And, over earth's indifference,
  Like God, calls up the light;

The truth that all might know, but all,
  With one consent, refuse;
To call on *that,* to break our pact
Of silence, were to make men *act.*
Good taste forbids that trumpet-call,
  And a censor sends our news.

It comes along a little wire
  Sunk in a deep sea;
It thins in the clubs to a little smoke
Between one joke and another joke;
For a city in flames is less than the fire
  That comforts you and me.

Play up, then, fiddles! Play, bassoon!
  The plains are soaked with red.
Ten thousand slaughtered fools, out there,
Clutch at their wounds and taint the air,
And . . . here is an excellent cartoon
  On what the Kaiser said.

On with the dance! In England yet
  The meadow-grass is green.
Play up, play up, and play your part!
It is not that we lack the heart
But that fate deftly swings the net
  And blood is best unseen.

God shields our eyes from too much light,
  Clothes the fine brain with clay;
He wraps mankind in swaddling bands
Till the trumpet ring across all lands —
"The time is come to stand upright,
  And flood the world with day."

Not yet, O God, not yet the gleam
When all the world shall wake!
Grey and immense comes up the dawn
And yet the blinds are not withdrawn,
And, in the dusk, one hideous dream
Forbids the day to break!

. . . . . .

Around a shining table sat
Five men in black tail-coats;
And, what their sin was, none could say;
For each was honest, after his way,
(Tho' there are sheep, and armament firms,
With all that this "connotes").

One was the friend of a merchant prince,
One was the foe of a priest,
One had a brother whose heart was set
On a gold star and an epaulette,
And — where the rotten carcass lies,
The vultures flock to feast.

But — each was honest after his way,
Lukewarm in faith, and old;
And blood, to them, was only a word,
And the point of a phrase their only sword,
And the cost of war, they reckoned it
In little disks of gold.

They were cleanly groomed. They were not to be bought.
And their cigars were good,
But they had pulled so many strings
In the tinselled puppet-show of kings
That, when they talked of war, they thought
Of sawdust, not of blood;

Not of the crimson tempest
Where the shattered city falls:
They thought, behind their varnished doors,
Of diplomats, ambassadors,
Budgets, and loans and boundary-lines,
Coercions and re-calls;

Forces and Balances of Power;
  Shadows and dreams and dust;
And how to set their bond aside
And prove they lied not when they lied,
And which was weak, and which was strong,
  But — never which was just.

Yet they were honest, honest men.
  Justice could take no wrong.
The blind arbitrament of steel,
The mailed hand, the armoured heel,
Could only prove that Justice reigned
  And that her hands were strong.

For *they* were strong. So might is right,
  And reason wins the day.
And, if at a touch on a silver bell
They plunged five nations into hell,
The blood of peasants is not red
  A hundred miles away.

But, if one touch on a silver bell
  Should loose, beyond control,
A blind immeasurable flood
Of lust and hate and tears and blood,
Unknown immeasurable powers
  That swept to an unseen goal,

Beyond their guidance for one hour,
  Beyond their utmost ken,
No huddled madman, crowned with straw,
Could so transgress his own last law . . .
So a secretary struck the bell
  For these five honest men.

II

With brown arms folded, by his hut, Johann,
  The young wood-cutter, waited. A bell tolled,
The sunset fires along the mountain ran,

The bucket at the well dripped a thin gold,
He saw the peaks like clouds of lilac bloom
Above him, then the pine-woods, fold on fold,

Around him, slowly filled with deep blue gloom.
Sleep, Dodi, sleep, he heard his young wife say,
Hushing their child behind him in the room.

Then, like a cottage casement, far away,
A star thrilled in a pale green space of sky;
And then, like stars, with tiny ray on ray,

He saw the homely village-lights reply:
And earth and sky were mingled in one night,
And all that vast dissolving pageantry

Drew to those quintessential points of light,
Still as the windless candles in a shrine,
Significant in the depth as in the height.

O, little blue pigeon, sleep. Sleep, Dodi mine,
She murmured. *Sleep, little rose in your rosy bed.*
The moon is rocking, rocking to rest in the pine.

Sleep, little blue pigeon,
Sleep on my breast,
Sleep, while the stars shine,
Sleep, while the big pine
Rocks with the white moon,
Over your nest.

A great grey cloud sailed slowly overhead.
She stood behind Johann. Around his eyes
Her soft hands closed. "Dodi's asleep," she said.

He drew her hands away. Then, as the skies
Darkened, he muttered, "Sonia, you must know.
I've kept the news from you all day."

Surprise
Parted her lips.

"To-morrow I must go."——
"Go? Where?"—— Clear as a silver bell, one star
Thrilled thro' the clouds. Her face looked white as snow.

——"Tomorrow morning, Sonia. No, not far!
To join the regiment. We are called, you see."—
"But why? What does it mean?"——
"Mean, Sonia? War!"

III

The troop-train couplings clanged like Fate
Above the bugles' din.
Sweating beneath their haversacks,
With rifles bristling on their backs,
Like heavy-footed oxen
The dusty men trooped in.

It seemed that some gigantic hand
Behind the veils of sky
Was driving, herding all these men
Like cattle into a cattle-pen,
So few of them could understand,
So many of them must die.

Johann was crammed into his truck.
Far off, he heard a shout.
The corporal cracked a bottle of wine,
And passed the drink along the line.
The iron couplings clanged again,
And the troop-train rumbled out.

"I left my wife a month's pay,"
A voice droned at his side.
"This war, they say, will last a year.
God knows what will become of her,
With three to feed."—"Ah, that's the way
In war," Johann replied.

"They say that war's a noble thing!
They say it's good to die,

For causes none can understand!
They say it's for the Fatherland!
They say it's for the Flag, the King,
And none must question why!"

The train shrieked into a tunnel.
"Duty? — Yes, that is good.
But when the thing has grown so vast
That no man knows, from first to last,
The reason why he finds himself
Up to his neck in blood;

"When you are trapped and carried along
By a Power that runs on rails;
Why, open that door, my friends, and see
The way you are fixed. You think you are free,
But the iron wheels are singing a song
That stuns our fairy-tales;

"When you are lifted up like this
Between a finger and thumb,
And dropt you don't know where or why,
And told to shoot and butcher and die,
And not to question, not to reply,
But go like a sheep to the shearers,
A lamb to the slaughter, dumb;

"What? Are the engines, then, our God?
Does one amongst you know
The *reason* of this bitter work?"—
"Reason? The devilry of the Turk!
Lock, stock, and barrel, the Sick Man
And all his tribe must go."

"England, they say, is on our side,"
Another voice began.
"The paper says it."—"But, I thought . . .
Does no one know why England fought
The great Crimean war, my friends,
Where blood so freely ran?"—

"O, ay! They say that England backed
The wrong horse, a sheer blunder!
She poured out blood *to guarantee,*
For all time, the integrity
Of European Islam."—"Ah!"—
The train rolled on like thunder.

Michael, the poet, a half Greek,
Listened to what they said.
Twice his lips parted as to speak,
And twice he sank his head,
Then a great fire burned in his eyes,
His sallow cheek flushed red.

"Comrades, comrades, you know not
The banners that you bear!
There is a sword upon our side,
A sword that is a song," he cried;
Then, through the song, as he whispered it,
His heart poured like a prayer:

I

"Whose face, whose on high,
Lifts thro' the sky
That aureole?
Who, over earth and sea,
Cries *Victory?*
Europe, thy soul
Comes home to thee.

II

"Is it a dream, a cloud
That thus hath rent the shroud
To speak, sublime and proud,
Thy faith aloud;
Whose eyes make young and fair
All things in earth and air;
The shadow of whose white wing
Makes violets spring?

III

"Is it the angel of day,
Whom the blind pray
Still that their faith
Soundly sleep by night?
Blood-red, yet white,
Re-risen, she saith
Let there be Light!

IV

"Whose are the conquering eyes
That burn thro' those dark skies?
Whose is the voice that cries
Awake, arise?
For, if she speak one word
To sheathe or draw the sword,
Her nations, on that day,
Answer her, *Yea!*

V

"It is the angel of God,
Sun-crowned, fire-shod,
Bidding hate cease.
Her proud voice on high
Bids darkness die.
Her name is Greece,
Or Liberty.

"Comrades," he cried, *"you know not*
The splendour of your blades!
This war is not as others wars:
The night shrinks with all her stars,
And Freedom rides before you
On the last of the Crusades.

"She rides a snow-white charger
Tho' her flanks drip with red,
Before her blade's white levin
The Crescent pales in heaven,

Nor shall she shrink from battle
Till the sun reign overhead;

Till the dead Cross break in blossom;
Till the God we sacrificed,
With that same love He gave us,
Stretch out His arms to save us,
Yea, till God save the People,
And heal the wounds of Christ."

IV

They crept across the valley
Where the wheat was turning brown.
There was no cloud in the blue sky,
No sight, no sound of an enemy,
When the sharp command rang over them,
Cover! and *Lie down!*

Johann, with four beside him,
In a cottage garden lay.
Peering over a little wall,
They heard a bird in the eaves call:
And, through the door, a clock ticked,
A thousand miles away.

A thousand miles, a thousand years,
And all so still and fair,
Then, like some huge invisible train,
Splitting the blue heavens in twain,
Out of the quiet distance rushed
A thunder of shrieking air.

The earth shook below them,
And lightnings lashed the sky,
The trees danced in the fires of hell,
The walls burst like a bursting shell;
And a bloody mouth gnawed at the stones
Like a rat, with a thin cry.

Then, all across the valley,
Deep silence reigned anew;

There was no cloud in the blue sky,
No sight, no sound of an enemy
But the red, wet shape beside Johann,
And that lay silent, too.

A bugle like a scourge of brass
Whipped thro' nerve and brain;
Up from their iron-furrowed beds
The long lines with bowed heads
Plunged to meet the hidden Death
Across the naked plain.

They leapt across the lewd flesh
That twisted at their feet;
They leapt across wild shapes that lay
Stark, besmeared with blood and clay
Like the great dead birds, with the glazed eyes,
That the farmer hangs in the wheat.

Johann plunged onward, counting them,
Scarecrows that once were men.
He counted them by twos, by fours,
Then, all at once, by tens, by scores!
Cover! Thro' flesh and nerve and bone
The bugles rang again.

They lay upon the naked earth,
Each in his place.
There was no cloud in the blue sky,
No sight, no sound of an enemy.
A brown bee murmured near Johann,
And the sweat streamed down his face;

The quiet hills that they must storm
Slept softly overhead,
When, in among their sun-lit trees
A sound as of gigantic bees
Whirred, and the drowsy field was ripped
With leaping streaks of lead.

The lightnings leapt among the lines
Like a mountain-stream in flood.

Scattering the red clay they ran
A river of fire around Johann,
And, thrice, a spatter of human flesh
  Blinded him with blood.

Then all the hills grew quiet
  And the sun slept on the field,
There was no cloud in the blue sky,
No sight, no sound of an enemy;
But, over them, like a scourge of brass
  The scornful bugles pealed.

Forward! At the double,
  Not questioning what it means!
The long rows of young men
Carried their quivering flesh again
Over those wide inhuman zones
  Against the cold machines.

Flesh against things fleshless,
  Never the soul's desire,
Never the flash of steel on steel,
But the brain that is mangled under the wheel,
The nerves that shrivel, the limbs that reel
  Against a sheet of fire.

They reeled against the thunder.
  Their captain at their head:
They reeled, they clutched at the air, they fell!
Halt! Rapid fire! The bugles' yell
Rang along the swaying ranks,
  And they crouched behind their dead.

The levelled rifles cracked like whips
  Against the dark hill brow:
And, for a peasant as for a king,
A dead man makes good covering;
Or, if the man be breathing yet,
  There is none to save him now.

Across a huddle of flesh, Johann
  Fired at the unseen mark.

He had not fired a dozen rounds
When the shuddering lump of tattered wounds
Lifted up a mangled head
  And whined, like a child, in the dark.

Its eyes were out. The raw strings
  Along its face lay red;
It caught the barrel in its hands
  And set it to its head.

Its jaw dropped dumbly, but Johann
  Saw and understood:
The rifle flashed, and the dead man
  Lay quiet in his blood.

Then all along the reeking hills
  And up the dark ravines,
The long rows of young men
Leapt in the glory of life again
To carry their warm and breathing breasts
  Against the cold machines;

Against the Death that mowed them down
With a cold indifferent hand;
And every gap at once was fed
With more life from the fountain-head,
Filled up from endless ranks behind
  In the name of the Fatherland.

Mown down! Mown down! Mown down! Mown down!
  They staggered in sheets of fire,
They reeled like ships in a sudden blast,
And shreds of flesh went spattering past,
And the hoarse bugles laughed on high,
  Like fiends from hell — *Retire!*

The tall young men, the tall young men,
  That were so fain to die,
It was not theirs to question,
  It was not theirs to reply.

They had broken their hearts on the cold machines;
And — they had not seen their foe;
And the reason of this butcher's work
It was not theirs to know;
For these tall young men were children
Five short years ago.

Headlong, headlong, down the hill,
They leapt across their dead.
Like madmen, wrapt in sheets of flame,
Yelling out of their hell they came,
And, in among their plunging hordes,
The shrapnel burst and spread.

The shrapnel severed the leaping limbs
And shrieked above their flight.
They rolled and plunged and writhed like snakes
In the red hill-brooks and the blackthorn brakes.
Their mangled bodies tumbled like elves
In a wild Walpurgis night.

Slaughter! Slaughter! Slaughter!
The cold machines whirred on.
And strange things crawled amongst the wheat
With entrails dragging round their feet,
And over the foul red shambles
A fearful sunlight shone.

And a remnant reached the trenches
Where the black-mouthed guns lay still.
There was no cloud in the blue sky,
No sight, no sound of an enemy.
The sunlight slept on the valley,
And the dead slept on the hill.

. . . . . .

But now, beyond the hill, there rose
A dull and sullen roar,
A sound as of distant breakers
That burst on a granite shore.

Nearer it boomed and nearer,
A muffled doomsday din,
A thunder as of assaulting seas
When the tides are rolling in.

A corporal leapt along the trench
And shook his blade;
"God sends the Greeks up from the South
In good time to our aid!

"The Turkish dogs are in the trap
Between us! God is good!
They are driving them over the ridge of the hill
For our guns, our guns to work their will.
Children of Marko, you shall lap
Your bellyful of blood."

Down, the dark clouds of Islam poured
Over the ragged height:
Down, into the valley of wheat,
And the warm dead that lay at their feet,
The men they had slaughtered, slaughtered, slaughtered
Grinned up at their flight.

Behind, the conquering thunders rolled
Along the abandoned hill.
Onward the scattering squadrons came
Like madmen, wrapt in a sheet of flame,
Straight for the lurking trenches,
Where the black-mouthed guns lay still.

And through the masked artillery ran
A whimper of straining hounds.
"Not yet," the order passed; "lie still,
Lie still, and lick your wounds."

Johann lay quivering, in a line
That whined like a leashed wolf-pack,
Leashed by a whisper, sharp as a sword,
At the white of their eyes, I give the word,

Then let the sun be turned to blood,
And the face of God grow black.

Up, up, like plunging bullocks
The dark-faced Moslems came.
Johann could see their wild eyes shine,
An order hissed along the line,
The black earth yawned like a crimson mouth,
And *slaughter, slaughter, slaughter, slaughter,*
The trenches belched their flame.

The rifles cracked little cattle-whips
Above the struggling hordes.
They rolled and plunged and writhed like snakes
In the trampled wheat and the black thorn brakes,
And the lightnings leapt among them
Like clashing crimson swords.

The rifles flogged their wallowing herds,
Flogged them down to die.
Down on their slain the slayers lay,
And the shrapnel thrashed them into the clay,
And tossed their limbs like tattered birds
Thro' a red volcanic sky.

Then, hard behind the thunder, swept
Long ranks of arrowy gleams;
Out of the trenches, down the hill
The level bayonets charged to kill,
And the massed terror that took the shock
Screamed as a woman screams.

Before Johann a young face rose
Like a remembered prayer;
He could not halt or swerve aside
In the onrush of that murderous tide,
He jerked his bayonet out of the body
And swung his butt in the air.

He yelled like a wolf to drown the cry
Of his own soul in pain.

To stifle the God in his own breast,
He yelled and cursed and struck with the rest,
And the blood bubbled over his boots
And greased his hands again.

Faces like drowned things underfoot
Slipped as he swung round:
A red mouth crackled beneath his boot
Like thorns in spongy ground.

Slaughter? Slaughter? So easy it seemed,
This work that he thought so hard!
His eyes lit with a flicker of hell,
He licked his lips, and it tasted well;
And — once — he had sickened to watch them slaughter
An ox in the cattle-yard.

For lust of blood, for lust of blood,
His greasy bludgeon swung:
His rifle-butt sang in the air,
And the things that crashed beneath it there
Were a cluster of grapes in the wine-press,
A savour of wine on his tongue.

Till now the allies' bloody hands
Across the work could join;
And, as Johann stretched out his own,
A man that was cleft to the white breast-bone
Writhed up between his knees and fired
A bullet into his groin.

He clutched at the wound. He groaned. He fell
On the warm breasts of the slain.
Yet, as he swooned, he dreamed he heard
From the lips of Greece one thunder-word,
Freedom! — dreamed that the sons of the mountain
Doubled the shout again;

Dreamed — for surely this was a dream —
He saw them, red from the fight,

Embraced and sobbing, "God is good,
And the blood that seals our brotherhood
Is the red of the dawn that breaks upon Europe."
Over him swept the night.

V

Michael had brought a message home. He came,
Groping, with blind pits where his eyes had been,
And a face glorious with an inner flame,

Whiter than death, and proud with things unseen.
He came to Sonia; and she stood there, wan,
Watching him, wondering what such pride might mean
A long low flame along the mountains ran.
He spoke to the air beyond her.

"Sonia," he said,
"It was your birthday when I left Johann

In the field-hospital. Since you were wed,
The first, perhaps, without some fond word spoken,
Some gift. And so he sent this disk of lead
Which came out of his wound. Wear it in token
That lovers cannot meet, nor freemen rest,
Until the chains of tyranny be broken.

Tell her," he said — blood washed the golden west —
"My wound is healing fast." With fumbling hand
Michael drew out the bullet from his breast.

She took and kissed it.

"Ah, but this war is grand!"
The blind man murmured. "Blessed are they that see
The beautiful angel of our Fatherland,

"The glory of the angel of Liberty
Walking thro' all those teeming tents of pain.
The tattered hospitals of our agony,

"Where broken men gaze into her eyes again,
Like happy children. Sonia, I am told
That wounds broke open for joy, tears flowed like rain

"When word came that the Allies would soon hold
Byzantium, and the mosque that in old days
Belonged to Christ.
There, glimmering like pale gold,

"High on the walls, they say, thro' a worn haze
Of whitewash, His crowned Face till time shall cease
Looks down in pity on all our tangled ways,

"And yearns to guide us into the way of peace.
Would God I might be with them, when they ride,
Those hosts of Christ, the Balkan States and Greece,

"Along the Golden Horn!"
The sunset died.
Yet his blind face grew glorious with light,
And, like a soul in ecstasy, he cried:
"The Prophet is fallen! His kingdom is rent asunder!
The blood-stained steeds move on with a sound of thunder!
The sword of the Prophet is broken. His cannon are dumb
The last Crusade rides into Byzantium!

"See — on the walls that enshrined the high faith of our fathers —
Rich as the dawn thro' the mist that on Bosphorus gathers,
Gleam the mosaics, the rich encrustations of old,
Crimson on emerald, azure and opal on gold.

"Faint thro' that mist, lo, the Light of the World, the forsaken
Glory of Christ, while with terror the mountains are shaken,
Silently waits; and the skies with wild trumpets are torn;
Waits, and the rivers run red to the Golden Horn;

"Waits, like the splendour of Truth on the walls of Creation;
Waits, with the Beauty, the Passion, the high Consecration,

Hidden away on the walls of the world, in a cloud,
Till the Veil be rent, and the Judgment proclaim Him aloud.

"Ah, the deep eyes, San Sofia, that deepen and glisten;
Ah, the crowned Face o'er thine altars, the King that must
listen,
Listen and wait thro' the ages, listen and wait,
For the tramp of a terrible host, and a shout in the gate!

"Conquerors, what is your sign, as ye ride thro' the City?
Is it the sword of wrath, or the sheath of pity?
Nay, but a Sword Reversed, let your hilts on high
Lift the sign of your Captain against the sky!

"Reverse the Sword! The Crescent is rent asunder!
Lift up the Hilt! Ride on with a sound of thunder!
Lift up the Cross! The cannon, the cannon are dumb.
The last Crusade rides into Byzantium!"

Under the apple-tree a shadow stirred.
An old grey peasant stood there in the night.
"*Michael,*" he said, "*this is bad news we've heard!*"

"*Bad news?*"—"*O, ay, we're in a pretty plight!*
They've quarrelled!"—"*Who?*"—"*Your great Crusading*
band,
Greece, and the Balkan States. They're going to fight!"

—"*Fight? Fight? For what?*"—"*Why, don't you under-*
stand
What war is? For a port to export prunes,
For Christ, my boy, and for the Fatherland."

VI

Johann had left the tents of death
And the moan of shattered men.
By God's own grace he was fit to face
The cold machines again.
It was not his to understand,
It was only his to know

His hand was against the comrade's hand
He clasped, a month ago.

It was not his to question,
It was not his to reply;
But, over him, the night grew black;
And his own troop was falling back,
Falling back before the flag
He had helped to raise on high.

And the guns, the guns that drove them,
Had thundered with his own!
The men he must kill for a little pay
Had marched beside him, yesterday!
Brothers in blood! By what foul lips
Was this war-trumpet blown?

Back from the heights they had stormed together,
The gulfs that had gorged their dead,
Back, by the rotting, shot-ripped plain,
Where the black wings fluttered and perched again,
And the yellow beaks in the darkness
Ripped and dripped and fed.

And once they stayed for water
By a deep marble well,
Under the walls of a shattered town
They dropt a guttering pine-torch down,
And caught one glimpse of a wine-press
Choked with the fruits of hell;

One glimpse of the women and children,
A tangle of red and white!
The naked fruitage hissed in the glare:
They caught the smell of the singeing hair,
And the torch was out, and the wine-press
Black as the covering night.

And fear went with them down the roads
Where they had marched in pride;
And villages in panic rout

Poured their rumbling ox-carts out,
And women dropped beneath their loads
And sobbed by the wayside.

VII

Once, as with bleeding feet they shambled along,
They came on a wayside fire, a ring of light,
Where old men, women and children, a motley throng,

And their white oxen, heavy with day-long flight,
Crouched and couched together, on the cold ground,
In a wild blaze of beauty that gashed the night,

Gashed and tattered the gloom like a blood-red wound.
Now on a blue or an orange sheepskin cloak
It splashed, and now on the wagons that shadowed them round.

But the great black eyes of the oxen, forgetting the yoke,
Shone with a sheltering pity, so meek, so mild,
While the women lay resting against them; and the smoke

Rolled with the cloud; and Johann, with a heart running wild,
Saw one pale woman that sat in the midst of them,
With a dark-blue robe wrapped round her, suckling a child.

And he thought of the child and the oxen of Bethlehem.

VIII

Back, they fell back before the guns,
Till on one last dark night
They lay along a mountain-ridge
Entrenched for their last fight.
A pine-wood rolled below them,
And the moon was all their light.

Johann looked down, in a wild dream,
On that remembered place:

O, like a ghost, he saw once more
The path that led to his own door,
A white thread, winding thro' the pines,
  And the tears ran down his face.

A ghost on guard among the dead
  With a heart running wild,
For the light of a little window-pane
And all the sorrow of earth again,
A crust of bread, a head on his breast,
  And the cry of his own child;

The cup of cold water
  That Love would change to wine . . .
Sonia! Dodi! O, to creep back! . . .
There was a cry in the woods, the crack
Of a pistol, and a startled shout,
  Halt! Give the countersign!

Then all the black unguarded woods
  Behind them spat red flame.
A thousand rifles shattered the night;
And, after the lightning, up the height,
A thousand steady shafts of light,
  The moonlit bayonets came.

Hurled to the trench by the storm of steel
  Under a heap of the slain,
Like one quick nerve in that welter of death,
Johann quivered, blood choked his breath,
And the charge broke over him like a sea,
  And passed like a hurricane.

He crept out in the ghastly moon
  By a black tarpaulined gun.
He stood alone on the moaning height
While the bayonets flashed behind the flight,
"Sonia! Dodi!" . . . He turned. He broke
  For the path, with a stumbling run.

Down by the little white moon-lit thread,
  He rushed thro' the ghostly wood,

A living man in a world of the dead,
To the place where his own home stood.

For War had "trained" him, strengthened his heart
To bear that glory again:
And he was "fitted" to play his part
At last, in a "world of men."

The embers of his hut still burned;
And, in the deep blue gloom,
His bursting eyeballs yet could see
A white shape under the apple-tree,
A naked body, dabbled with red,
Like a drift of apple-bloom.

She lay like a broken sacrament
That the dogs have defiled,
"Sonia! Sonia! Speak to me!"
He babbled like a child.

The child, the child that lay on her knees. . . .
Devil nor man may name
The things that Europe must not print,
But only whisper and chuckle and hint,
Lest the soul of Europe rise in thunder
And swords melt in the flame.

She bore the stigmata of sins
That devil nor man may tell;
For O, good taste, good taste, good taste,
Constrains and serves us well;
And the censored truth that dies on earth
Is the crown of the lords of hell.

The quiet moon sailed slowly out
From a grey cloud overhead,
When, out of the gnarled old apple-tree
There came a moan and, heavily
A patter of blood fell, gout by gout
On the white breast of the dead.

There came a moan from the apple-tree,
And the moon showed him there,—
The blind man with his arms stretched wide,
And a nail thro' his hand on either side,
A nail thro' the naked palms of his feet
And a crown of thorns in his hair.

Johann knelt down before him,
"O brother, O Son of Man,
It was not ours to doubt or reply
When the people were led out to die,
This, this is the end of our Liberty,
And the goal for which we ran.

"O, Christ of the little children. . . ."
Over his naked blade
Johann bowed, bowed and fell,
Gasping, *"Sonia, Dodi, tell*
Your God in heaven, I grow so weary
Of all that He has made."

Then, still as frost across the world
The tender moonlight spread,
And, one by one, from the apple-tree
The drops of blood fell heavily,
And the blind man that was crucified
Spake softly, to the dead.

"Conquered, we shall conquer!
They have not hurt the soul.
For there is another Captain
Whose legions round us roll,
Battling across the wastes of Death
Till all be healed and whole.

"Till, members of one Body,
Our agony shall cease;
Till, like a song thro' chaos,
His marching worlds increase;
Till the souls that sit in darkness..
Behold the Prince of Peace;

"Till the dead Cross break in blossom;
Till the God we sacrificed,
With that same love He gave us,
Stretch out His arms to save us,
Yea, till God save the People,
And heal the wounds of Christ."

EPILOGUE

THE DAWN OF PEACE

Yes ——"on our brows we feel the breath
Of dawn," though in the night we wait!
An arrow is in the heart of Death,
A God is at the doors of Fate!
The Spirit that moved upon the Deep
Is moving through the minds of men:
The nations feel it in their sleep.
A change has touched their dreams again.

Voices, confused and faint, arise,
Troubling their hearts from East and West.
A doubtful light is in their skies,
A gleam that will not let them rest:
The dawn, the dawn is on the wing,
The stir of change on every side,
Unsignalled as the approach of Spring,
Invincible as the hawthorn tide.

Have ye not heard, tho' darkness reigns,
A People's voice across the gloom,
A distant thunder of rending chains,
And nations rising from their tomb,
Then — if ye will — uplift your word
Of cynic wisdom, till night fail,
Tell us He came to bring a sword,
Spit poison in the Holy Grail.

Say that we dream! Our dreams have woven
Truths that out-face the burning sun.

The lightnings, that we dreamed, have cloven
  Time, space, and linked all lands in one!
Dreams! But their swift celestial fingers
  Have knit the world with threads of steel,
Till no remotest island lingers
  Outside the world's one Commonweal.

Tell us that custom, sloth, and fear
  Are strong, then name them "common sense"!
Tell us that greed rules everywhere,
  Then dub the lie "experience":
Year after year, age after age,
  Has handed down, thro' fool and child,
For earth's divinest heritage
  The dreams whereon old wisdom smiled.

Dreams are they? But ye cannot stay them,
  Or thrust the dawn back for one hour!
Truth, Love, and Justice, if ye slay them,
  Return with more than earthly power:
Strive, if ye will, to seal the fountains
  That send the Spring thro' leaf and spray:
Drive back the sun from the Eastern mountains,
  Then — bid this mightier movement stay.

It is the Dawn! The Dawn! The nations
  From East to West have heard a cry,——
Though all earth's blood-red generations
  By hate and slaughter climbed thus high,
Here — on this height — still to aspire,
  One only path remains untrod,
One path of love and peace climbs higher.
  Make straight that highway for our God.

A BELGIAN CHRISTMAS EVE

(1915)

DEDICATION

THOU *whose deep ways are in the sea,*
Whose footsteps are not known,
To-night a world that turned from Thee
Is waiting — at Thy Throne.

The towering Babels that we raised
Where scoffing sophists brawl,
The little Antichrists we praised —
The night is on them all.

The fool hath said . . . The fool hath said . . .
And we, who deemed him wise,
We, who believed that Thou wast dead,
How should we seek Thine eyes?

How should we seek to Thee for power,
Who scorned Thee yesterday?
How should we kneel in this dread hour?
Lord, teach us how to pray.

Grant us the single heart once more
That mocks no sacred thing,
The Sword of Truth our fathers wore
When Thou wast Lord and King.

Let darkness unto darkness tell
Our deep unspoken prayer;
For, while our souls in darkness dwell,
We know that Thou art there.

PRELUDE

Under which banner? It was night
  Beyond all nights that ever were.
The Cross was broken. Blood-stained Might
  Moved like a tiger from its lair,
And all that heaven had died to quell
Awoke, and mingled earth with hell.

For Europe, if it held a creed,
  Held it thro' custom, not thro' faith.
Chaos returned in dream and deed,
  Right was a legend — Love, a wraith;
And That from which the world began
Was less than even the best in man.

God in the image of a snake
  Dethroned that dream, too fond, too blind,
The man-shaped God whose heart could break,
  Live, die, and triumph with mankind;
A Super-snake, a Juggernaut,
Dethroned the Highest of human thought.

Choose, England! For the eternal foe
  Within thee, as without, grew strong,
By many a super-subtle blow
  Blurring the lines of right and wrong
In Art and Thought, till nought seemed true
But that soul-slaughtering cry of *New!*

New wreckage of the shrines we made
  Thro' centuries of forgotten tears. . . .
We knew not where their hands had laid
  Our Master. Twice a thousand years
Had dulled the uncapricious sun.
Manifold worlds obscured the One;

Obscured the reign of Law, our stay,
  Our compass thro' the uncharted sea,
The one sure light, the one sure way,

The one firm base of Liberty;
The one firm road that men have trod
Thro' Chaos to the Throne of God.

Choose ye! A hundred legions cried
Dishonour, or the instant sword!
Ye chose. Ye met that blood-stained tide.
A little kingdom kept its word;
And, dying, cried across the night,
Hear us, O earth, We chose the Right.

Whose is the victory? Though ye stood
Alone against the unmeasured foe,
By all the tears, by all the blood,
That flowed, and have not ceased to flow,
By all the legions that ye hurled
Back thro' the thunder-shaken world;

By the old that have not where to rest,
By lands laid waste and hearths defiled,
By every lacerated breast,
And every mutilated child,
Whose is the victory? Answer, ye
Who, dying, smiled at tyranny: —

Under the sky's triumphal arch
The glories of the dawn begin.
Our dead, our shadowy armies, march
E'en now, in silence, thro' Berlin —
Dumb shadows, tattered blood-stained ghosts,
But cast by what swift following hosts!

And answer, England! *At thy side,*
Thro' seas of blood, thro' mists of tears,
Thou that for Liberty hast died
And livest, to the end of years.
And answer, earth! Far off, I hear
The pæans of a happier sphere: —

The trumpet blown at Marathon
Exulted over earth and sea:

But burning angel lips have blown
The trumpets of thy Liberty,
For who, beside thy dead, could deem
The faith, for which they died, a dream?

Earth has not been the same, since then,
Europe from thee received a soul,
Whence nations moved in law, like men,
As members of a mightier whole,
Till wars were ended. . . . In that day,
So shall our children's children say.

CHARACTERS

RADA . . . . . Wife of the village doctor.
BETTINE . . . . Her daughter, aged twelve.
BRANDER . . . } German soldiers quartered in her house
TARRASCH . . . } during the occupation of the village.
NANKO . . . . An old, half-witted schoolmaster, living in the care of the doctor. He has a delusion that it is always Christmas Eve.
German soldiers.

The action takes place in a Belgian village, during the War of 1914. The scene is a room in the doctor's house. On the right there is a door opening to the street, a window with red curtains, and a desk under the window. On the left there is a large cupboard with a door on either side of it, one leading to a bedroom and the other to the kitchen. At the back an open fire is burning brightly. Over the fireplace there is a reproduction in colours of the Dresden Madonna. The room is lit only by the firelight and two candles in brass candlesticks, on a black oak table, at which the two soldiers are seated, playing cards and drinking beer.

RADA, *a dark handsome woman, sits on a couch to the left of the fire, with her head bowed in her hands, weeping.*

NANKO *sits cross-legged on a rug before the fire, rubbing his hands, snapping his fingers, and chuckling to himself.*

TARRASCH

[*Throwing down the cards.*]

Pish! You have all the luck. [*He turns to* RADA] Look here, my girl, where is the use of snivelling? We've been killing pigs all day and now we want to unbuckle a bit. You ought to think yourself infernally lucky to be alive at all, and I'm not sure that you will be so fortunate when the other boys come back. Wheedled them out of the house finely, didn't you? On a fine wildgoose chase, too. Hidden money! Refugees don't bury their money and leave the secret behind them. You've been whimpering ever since we two refused to believe you. What's your game, eh? I warn you there'll be hell to pay.

RADA

[*Sobbing and burying her face.*]

God, be pitiful!

TARRASCH

This is war, this is! And you can't expect war to be all swans and shining armour. No — nor smart uniforms either. Look at the mud my friend and I have already annexed from Belgium. Brander, you know it's a most astonishing fact; but I have remarked it several times. Those women whose eyes glitter at the sight of a spiked helmet are the first to be astonished by the realities of war. They expect the dead to jump up and kiss them and tell them it is all a game, as soon as the battle is ended. No, no, my dear; it's only in war that one sees how small is one's personal happiness in comparison with greater things.

[*He fills a glass and drinks.* BRANDER *lights a cigar.*]

NANKO

Exactly. In times of peace we forget those eternal silences. We value life too highly. We become domesticated. Why, I suppose in this magnificent war there have been so

many women and children killed that they would fill the great Cloth Hall at Ypres; and, as for the young men, there have been so many slaughtered that their dead bodies would fill St. Peter's at Rome. Why, I suppose they would fill the three hundred abbeys of Flanders and all the cathedrals in the world chock-full from floor to belfry, wouldn't they? How Goya would have loved to paint them! Can't you see it?

[*He grows ecstatic over the idea.*]

Tournai with its five clock-towers, Ghent, and Bruges,
Louvain and Antwerp, Rheims and Westminster,
Under the round white moon, on Christmas Eve,
With towers of frozen needlework and spires
That point to God; but all their painted panes
Bursting with dreadful arms and gaping faces,
Gargoyles of flesh; and round them, in the snow,
The little cardinals, like gouts of blood,
The little bishops, running like white mice,
Hooded with violet spots, quite, quite dismayed
To find there was no room for them within
Upon that holy night when Christ was born.

But perhaps if Goya were living to-day he would prefer to pack them into Chicago meat factories, with the intellectuals dancing outside like marionettes, and the unconscious Hand of God pulling the strings. You know one of their very latest theories is that He is a somnambulist.

TARRASCH

[*To* Rada.]

You should read Schopenhauer, my dear, and learn to estimate these emotions at their true value. You would then be able to laugh at these feelings which seem to you now so important. It is the mark of *Kultur* to be able to laugh at all sentiments.

NANKO

The priests, I suppose, are still balancing themselves on the tight-rope, over the jaws of the crowd. The poor old

Pope did his best for his Master, when the Emperor asked him for a blessing on his arms. *"I* bless Peace," said the Pope; but nobody listened. I composed a little poem about that. I called it St. Peter's Christmas. It went like this: —

And does the Cross of Christ still stand?
  Yes, though His friends may watch from far —
And who is this at His right hand,
  This Rock in the red surf of war?

This, this is he who once denied
  And turned and wept and turned again.
Last night before an Emperor's pride
  He stood and blotted out that stain.

Last night an Emperor bared the sword
  And bade him bless. He stood alone.
Alone in all the world, *his* word
  Confessed — and blessed — a loftier throne.

I hear, still travelling towards the Light,
  In widening waves till Time shall cease,
The Power that breathed from Rome last night
  His infinite whisper — *I bless Peace.*
    [TARRASCH *and* BRANDER *applaud ironically.*]

TARRASCH

Excellent! Excellent! [*To* RADA] You should have seen our brave soldiers laughing — do you remember, Brander — at a little village near Termonde. They made the old doctor and his cook dance naked round the dead body of his wife, who had connived at the escape of her daughter from a Prussian officer.

NANKO

Ah, that was reality, wasn't it? None of your provincial respectability about that, none of your shallow conventionality! That's what the age wants — realism!

TARRASCH

It was brutal, I confess; but better than British hypocrisy, eh? There was something great about it, like the neighing of the satyrs in the Venusberg music.

RADA

[*Sinking on her knees by the couch and sobbing.*]

God! God!

TARRASCH

They were beginning to find out the provincialism of their creeds in England. The pessimism of Schopenhauer had taught them much; and if it had not been for this last treachery, this last ridiculous outburst of the middle-class mind on behalf of what they call honour, we should have continued to tolerate (if not to enjoy), in Berlin, those plays by their own intellectuals which expose so wittily the inferior *Kultur,* the shrinking from reality, of their (for the most part) not intellectual people. I have the honour, madam, to request that you should no longer make this unpleasant sound of weeping. You irritate my nerves. Have you not two men quartered upon you instead of one? And are they not university students? If your husband and the rest of the villagers had not resisted our advance, they might have been alive too. In any case, your change is for the better. Isn't it?

[*He lights a cigar.*]

NANKO

Exactly! Exactly! You remember, Rada, I used to be a schoolmaster myself in the old days; and if *you* knew what *I* know, you wouldn't cry, my dear. You'd understand that it's entirely a question of the survival of the fittest. A biological necessity, that's what it is. And Haeckel himself has told us that, though we may resign our hopes of immortality, and the grave is the only future for our beloved ones, yet there is infinite consolation to be found in examining a piece of moss or looking at a beetle. That's what the Germans call the male intellect.

TARRASCH

Is this man attempting to be insolent?
[*He rises as if to strike* NANKO.]

BRANDER

[*Tapping his forehead.*]

Take no notice of him. He's only a resident patient. He was not calling you a beetle. He has delusions. He thinks it is always Christmas Eve. That's his little tree in in the corner. As Goethe should have said —

There was a little Christian.
He had a little tree.
Up came a Superman
And cracked him, like a flea.

TARRASCH

[*Laughing.*]

Very good! You should send that to the *Tageblatt,* Brander.

Well, Rada, or whatever your name is, you'd better find something for us to eat. I'm sick of this whimpering.

Wouldn't your Belgian swine have massacred us all, if we'd given them the chance? We've thousands of women and children at home snivelling and saying, "Oh! my God! Oh! my God!" just like you.

RADA

[*Rising to her feet in sudden anger.*]

Then why are you in Belgium, gentlemen?
Is it the husks and chaff that the swine eat,
Or is it simply butchery?

[*They stare at her in silence, overmastered for a moment by her passion. Then, her grief welling up again, she casts herself down on the couch, and buries her face in her hands, sobbing.*]

God! God! God!

BRANDER

Don't you trouble about God. What can *He* do when both sides go down on their marrow-bones? He can't make both sides win, can He?

NANKO

That's how the intellectuals prove He doesn't exist. Either He is not almighty, they say, or else He is unjust enough not to make both sides win. But all those anthropomorphic conceptions are out of date now, even in England, as this gentleman very truly said. You see, it was so degrading, Rada, to think that God had anything in common with mankind (though love was once quite fashionable), and as we didn't know of anything higher than ourselves we were simply compelled to say that He resembled something lower, such as earthquakes, and tigers, and puppet-shows, and ideas of that sort. Reality above all things! You may see God in sunsets; but there was nothing *real* about the *best* qualities of mankind. It's curious. The more intellectual and original you are, the lower you have to go, and the more likely you are to end in the old dance of charlatans and beasts. I suppose that's an argument for tradition and growth. If we call it Evolution, nobody will mind very much.

RADA

[*Wringing her hands in an agony of grief.*]

Oh, God, be pitiful, be pitiful!

BRANDER

[*Standing in front of her.*]

Look here, we've had enough of this music. I've been watching you, and there's more upon your mind than sorrow for the dead. Why were you so anxious to wheedle us all out of the house? Tarrasch has warned you there'll be hell to pay when the others come back. What was the game, eh? You'd better tell me. You couldn't have thought you were going to escape through our lines to-night.

[*There is a sudden uproar outside, and a woman's scream, followed by the terrified cry of a child.*]

Ah! Ah! Father!

BRANDER

Hear that. The men are mad with brandy and blood and — other things. There's no holding them in, even from the children. You needn't wince. Even from the children, I say. What chance would there be for a fine-looking wench like yourself?

No, you were not going to try that. You've something to hide, here, in the house, eh? Well, now you've got rid of the others, and we've had a drink, we're going to look for it. What is there?

[*He points to the bedroom door.*]

RADA

[*Rising to her feet slowly, steadying herself with one hand on the couch and fixing her eyes on his face.*]

My bedroom. No. I've nothing here to hide. This is war, isn't it? If I choose to revenge myself on those that have used me badly, people that I hate, by telling you where you can find what everybody wants, money, money — I suppose you want that — isn't that good enough?

BRANDER

Better come with us, then, and show us this treasure-trove.

RADA

[*Shrinking back.*]

No, no, I dare not. All those dead out there would terrify me, terrify me!

TARRASCH

A pack of lies! What were you up to, eh? Telephoning to the English?

BRANDER

It has been too much for her nerves. Don't worry her, or she'll go mad. Then there'll be nobody left to get us our supper.

[TARRASCH *wanders round the room, opening drawers and examining letters and other contents at the desk.*]

NANKO

That *would* be selfish, Rada. You know it's Christmas Eve. Nobody ought to think of unpleasant things on Christmas Eve. What have you done with the Christmas-tree, Rada?

BRANDER

And who's to blame? That's what I want to know. You don't blame *us*, do you? We didn't know where we were marching a month ago; and possibly we shall be fighting on your side against somebody else, a year hence.

NANKO

Of course they didn't know! Poor soldiers don't.

TARRASCH

[*Who has been trying the bedroom door.*]

In the meantime, what have you got behind that door? Give me the key.

RADA

[*Hurriedly, and as if misunderstanding him, opens the cupboard. She speaks excitedly.*]

Food! Food! Food for hungry men. Food enough for a wolf pack. Come on, help yourselves!

TARRASCH

Look, Brander! What a larder! Here's a dinner for forty men. Isn't it?

RADA

Better take your pick before the others come.
[*She thrusts dishes into* BRANDER'S *hands and loads* TARRASCH *with bottles. They lay the table with them,* RADA *seeming to share their eagerness.*]

BRANDER

[*Looking at his hands.*]

Here! Bring me a basin of warm water. There are times when you can't touch food without washing your hands.
[RADA *hesitates, then goes into the kitchen.* BRANDER *holds out a ring to* TARRASCH.]
Her husband's ring. I got it off his finger
When he went down. He lay there, doubled up,
With one of those hideous belly wounds. He begged,
Horribly, for a bullet; so, poor devil,
I put him out of his misery. I can't eat
With hands like that. Ugh! Look!

NANKO

[*Rising and peering at them.*]

Ah, but they're red.
Red, aren't they? And there's red on your coat, too.
[*He fingers it curiously.*]
I suppose that's blood, eh? People are such cowards.
Many of them never seem to understand
That man's a fighting animal. They're afraid,
Dreadfully afraid, of the sight of blood.
I think it's a beautiful colour, beautiful!
You know, in the Old Testament, they used
To splash it on the door-posts.

BRANDER

[*Pushing him away.*]

Go and sit down,
You crazy old devil!
[RADA *enters with a bowl of water, sets it on a chair, and returns to the couch.* BRANDER *washes his hands.*]

TARRASCH

My hands want washing, too.
My God, you've turned the water into wine.
Get me some fresh.
[RADA *approaches, stares at the bowl, and moves back, swaying a little.*]

BRANDER

[*Roughly.*]

I'll empty it. Give it to me.
[*He goes out.*]

NANKO

The Old Testament, you know, is full of it.
Who is this, it says, *that cometh from Edom,*
In dyed garments from Bozrah? It was blood
That dyed their garments. And in *Revelations*
Blood came out of the wine-press, till it splashed
The bridles of the horses; and the seas
Were all turned into blood. Doesn't that show
That man's a fighting animal?

TARRASCH

[*Again fumbling at the bedroom door.*]

Give me the key.

RADA

[*Thrusting herself between him and the door.*]

That is my bedroom. You must not go in.

TARRASCH

Are they so modest, then, in Belgium, madam?
You're fooling us. What is it? Loot? More loot?
The family stocking, eh?
[BRANDER *enters. He goes to the table and begins eating.*]

NANKO

The stocking? No!
The stocking is in the chimney-corner, see.
[*He shakes an empty stocking that hangs in the fire-place.*]
Bettine and I, we always hang it up
Ready for Santa Claus. It's a good custom.
They do it in Germany. The children there
Believe that Santa Claus comes down the chimney.

TARRASCH

If I know anything of women's eyes,
It's either money, or a daughter, Rada.
And so — the key! Or else I burst the door.

RADA

[*Looks at him for a moment before speaking.*]

I throw myself upon your mercy, then.
It *is* my little girl. She is twelve years old.
Don't wake her. She has slept all through this night.
I thought I might have hidden her. It's too late.
It's of the other men that I'm afraid,
Not you. But they are drunk. If they come back. . . .
Help me to save her! I'll do anything for you,
Anything! Only help me to get her away!
I'll pray for you every night of my life. I'll pray. . . .
[*She stretches out her hands pitifully and begins to weep. The men stand staring at her. The door opens behind her, and* BETTINE, *in her night-dress, steals into the room.*]

BETTINE

Mother —— Oh!
[*She stops at sight of the strangers.*]

BRANDER

Don't be afraid. I'm Nanko's friend.
What? Don't you know me? I came down the chimney.

BETTINE

I don't see any soot upon your face.
[*She goes nearer.*]
Nor on your clothes. That's red paint, isn't it?

BRANDER

Can't help it. Santa Claus — that is my name.
What's yours?

BETTINE

Bettine.

BRANDER

Ah! I've a little girl
At home — about your age, too — called Bettine.

BETTINE

[*Who has been watching him curiously.*]

I know. You are the British. Mother said
The British would be here before the Boches.
I dreamed that you were coming, and I thought
I heard the marching. Weren't you singing, too?
It made me feel so happy in my sleep.
What were you singing? "It's a long, long way
To ——" what d'you call it? *Tipperary?* eh?
What does that mean?

BRANDER

A place a long way off.

BETTINE

As far as heaven?

BRANDER

Almost as far as — home.

BETTINE

Well, I suppose it means the Boches must march
A long, long way before they reach it, eh?

There's Canada. They'll have to march through that.
Then India, and that's huge. Why, Nanko says
There are three hundred million people there,
And all their soldiers ride on elephants.
Poor Boches! I'm sorry for them. Nanko says
They're trying to ride across two thousand years
In motor-cars. It's easy enough to ride
Two thousand miles; but not two thousand years.
[*She runs to the stocking and examines it.* TARRASCH *and* BRANDER *return to the table and eat and drink.*]
There's nothing in the stocking. Never mind,
Nanko, when Christmas really comes, you'll see.
[*With a sudden note of fear in her voice.*]
Mother, where's father?

RADA

[*Putting an arm round her.*]

He will soon be with us.
It's all right, darling.

BETTINE

Mother, mayn't we try
The new tunes on the gramophone?

NANKO

Now, wait!
I've an idea. It's Christmas Eve, you know.
We'll celebrate it. Where's the Christmas-tree?
We'll get that ready first.
[BETTINE *pulls the little Christmas-tree out from the corner.* RADA *glances from the child to the men, as if hoping that her play will win them to help her.*]

BETTINE

It's nearly a week,
Isn't it, Nanko, since you had your tree?

BRANDER

Here, put it on the table.

NANKO

[*Clapping his hands.*]

Yes, that's best.
I fear that we shall want a new tree, soon.
This one is withered. See how the needles drop.
There's no green left. It's growing old, Bettine.
What shall we hang on it?

TARRASCH

What d'you think
Of that now?

[*He hangs his revolver on the tree.*]

BETTINE

[*Laughing merrily.*]

Oh! Oh! What a great big pistol!
That'll be father's present! And now what else?

NANKO

[*Eagerly.*]

What else?

BRANDER

Well, what do you say to a ring, Bettine?
How prettily it hangs upon the bough!
Isn't that fine?

[*He hangs the ring upon the tree.*]

BETTINE

[*Staring at it.*]

It's just like father's ring!

TARRASCH

Now light the candles. Isn't it?

NANKO

[*Clapping his hands and capering.*]

Yes, that's right!
Light all the little candles on the tree!
Oh, doesn't the pistol shine, doesn't the ring
Glitter!

BETTINE

But, oh, it *is* like father's ring.
He had a little piece of mother's hair
Plaited inside it, just like that. It *is*
My father's ring!

RADA

No; there are many others,
Bettine, just like it — hundreds, hundreds of others.

BRANDER

And now — what's in that package over there?

BETTINE

Oh, that's the new tunes for the gramophone.
That's father's Christmas present to us all.

NANKO

Now, what a wonderful man the doctor was!
Nobody else, in these parts, would have thought
Of buying a gramophone. Let's open it.

BETTINE

Yes! Yes! And we'll give father a surprise!
It shall be playing a tune when he comes in!
He won't be angry, will he, mumsy dear?
[BRANDER *opens the package.* NANKO *rubs his hands in de-*
light. They get the gramophone ready.]

NANKO

Oh, this will be a merry Christmas Eve.
There now — just see how this kind gentleman
Has opened the package for us. Now you see
The good of war. It benefits the health.
Sets a man up. Look at old Peter's legs;
He's a disgrace to the village, a disgrace!
Nobody shoots him either, so he spoils
Everything; for you know, you must admit,
Bettine, that war means natural selection —
Survival of the fittest, don't you see?
For instance, *I* survive, and *you* survive:
Don't we? So Peter shouldn't spoil it all.
They say that all the tall young men in France
Were killed in the Napoleonic wars,
So that most Frenchmen at the present day
Are short and fat. Isn't that funny, Bettine?
[*She laughs.*]
Which shows us that tall men are not required
To-day. So nobody knows. Perhaps thin legs
Like Peter's *may* be useful, after all,
In aeroplanes, or something. Every ounce
Makes a great difference there. Nobody knows.
It's natural selection. See, Bettine?
Ah, now the gramophone's ready. Make it play
A Christmas tune. That's what the churches do
On Christmas Eve: for all the churches now,
And all the tall cathedrals with their choirs,
What do you think they are, Bettine? I'll tell you.
I'll whisper it. *They're great big gramophones!*
[*She laughs.*]
Now for a Christmas tune!

TARRASCH

[*Adjusting a record.*]

There's irony
In your idea, my friend, that would delight
The ghost of Nietzsche! Certainly, it shall play
A Christmas tune. Here is the very thing.

[*There is an uproar of drunken shouts in the distance.* BRANDER *locks the outer door.*]

BETTINE

The inn is full of drunken men to-night,
Mother. D'you hear them? Mother, was it an inn
Like that — the one that's in my Christmas piece?

BRANDER

[*To* TARRASCH.]

Don't do it, we've had irony enough.
Don't start it playing, if you want to keep
This Christmas party to ourselves, my boy.
The men are mad with drink, and — other things.
Look here, Tarrasch, what are we going to do
About this youngster, eh?

TARRASCH

Better keep quiet
Till morning. When the men have slept it off
They'll stand a better chance of slipping away.
They're all drunk, officers and men as well.

BRANDER

That's the most merciful thing that one can say.

NANKO

Oh, what a pity! I did think, Bettine,
That we should have some music. Well — I know!
Tell us the Christmas piece you learned in school.
That's right. Stand there! No, stand up on this bench.
Your mother tells me that you won the prize
For learning it so beautifully, Bettine.
That's right. Now, while you say it, I will stand
Here, with a candle. See, that illustrates
The scene.

[*He lifts one of the candles to illuminate the picture of*

the Madonna and child. For a moment he speaks with a curious dignity.]

You know it is not all delusion
About this Christmas Eve. The wise men say
That Time is a delusion. Now then, speak
Your Christmas piece.

BETTINE

[*With her hands behind her, as if in school, she obeys him.*]

She laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night,

And lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round them, and they were sore afraid.

And the angel said unto them, "Fear not: for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

"For unto you is born this day in the City of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

"And this shall be a sign unto you; ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger."

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying: —

"Glory to God in the Highest, and on earth peace. . . ."

[*There is silence for a moment, then a pistol-shot a scream, and a roar of drunken laughter without, followed by a furious pounding on the door.* BETTINE *runs to her mother.*]

BRANDER

Here, Tarrasch, what the devil are we to do
About this child?

[*He calls through the door.*]

Clear out of this! The house
Is full. We want to sleep.

[*The uproar grows outside, and the pounding is resumed. There is a crash of broken glass at the window.*]

BETTINE

Mother, I'm frightened!
It is the Boches! Mother, it is the Boches!
Where are the British, mother? You said the British
Were sure to be here first!

BRANDER

Bundle the child
Into that room, woman, at once!

[RADA *snatches the revolver from the Christmas-tree and hurries* BETTINE *into the bedroom just as the other door is burst open and a troop of soldiers appear on the threshold, shouting and furious with drink. They sing, with drunken gestures, in the doorway:*]

"Zum Rhein, zum Rhein, zum deutscher Rhein. . . ."

FIRST SOLDIER

Come on!
They're in that room. I saw them! The only skirts
Left in the village. Comrades, you've had your fun—
It's time for ours.

BRANDER

Clear out of this. You're drunk.
We want to sleep.

SECOND SOLDIER

Well, hand the women over.

TARRASCH

There are no women here.

FIRST SOLDIER

You greedy wolf,
I saw them.

NANKO

Come! Come! Come! It's Christmas Eve!

SECOND SOLDIER

Well, if there are no petticoats, where's the harm
In letting us poor soldiers take a squint
Through yonder door? By God, we'll do it, too!
Come on, my boys.

[*They make a rush towards the room.*]

NANKO

Be careful, or you'll smash
The Christmas-tree! You'll smash the gramophone!

[*A soldier tries the bedroom door. It is opened from within, and* RADA *appears on the threshold with the revolver in her hand.*]

FIRST SOLDIER

Liars! Liars!

RADA

There is one woman here,
One woman and a child. . . .
And war, they tell me, is a noble thing,
The nurse of honour, manhood.

SECOND SOLDIER

God, a speech!

NANKO

[*Who is hugging his Christmas-tree near the fire again.*]

Certainly, Rada! You will not deny
That life's a battle.

RADA

You hear, drunk as you are,
Up to your necks in blood, you hear this fool,
This poor old fool, piping his dreary cry.
And through his lips, and through his softening brain,
The men that use you, cheat you, drive you out
To slaughter and be slaughtered, teach the world
That this black vampire, sucking at our breasts,

Is good. Men! Men! The pestilence of your dead
Is murdering you by legions. All the trains
Of quicklime that your Emperor sends behind you
Can never eat its way through all that flesh —
Three hundred miles of dead! Your dead!

FIRST SOLDIER

Hoch! Hoch!
A speech!

[*They make a movement towards her, which she arrests by raising the revolver.*]

RADA

I do not hate! I pity you all.
I tell you, you are doing it in a dream.
You are drugged. You are not awake.

NANKO

I have sometimes thought
The very same.

RADA

But you will wake one day.
Listen! If you have children of your own,
Listen to me . . . the child is twelve years old.
She has never had one hard word spoken to her
In all her life.

SECOND SOLDIER

Nor shall she now, by God!
Where is she? Bring her out!

FIRST SOLDIER

Twelve years of age?
Add two, because her mother loves her so!
That's ripe enough for marriage to a soldier.

[*They laugh uproariously, and sing again mockingly:*]

"Zum Rhein, zum Rhein, zum deutscher Rhein!"

[*They move forward again.*]

RADA

[*Raising the revolver.*]

One word. If you are deaf to honour, blind
To truth, and if compassion cannot reach you,
Then I appeal to fear! Yes, you shall fear me.
Listen! I heard, when I was in that room,
A sound like gun-fire coming from the south:
What if it were the British?

SOLDIERS

Ah! The swine!
The dogs!

RADA

Bull-dogs; and slow. But they are coming,
And, where they hold, they never will let go.
Though they may come too late for me and mine,
You are on your trial now before the world.
You never can escape it. They are coming,
With justice and the unconquerable law!
I warn you, though their speech is not my own,
And I shall be but one of all the dead,
Dead, with that child, in a forgotten grave —
I speak for them, and they will keep my word.
Yes, if you harm that child . . . the British. . . . Ah!
[*They advance towards her.*]
I have one bullet for the child and five
To share between you and myself.

FIRST SOLDIER

Come on!
She can't shoot! Look at the way she's holding it!
Duck down, and make a rush for it.

SOLDIERS

Come .

[*They make a rush.* RADA *steps back into the bedroom and shuts the door in their faces.*]

SOLDIERS

Locked out in the cold. Come, break the damned thing down!

BETTINE

[*Crying within.*]

O British! British! Come! Come quickly, British!

BRANDER

[*Trying to interpose.*]

She'll keep her word. You'll never get 'em alive.

TARRASCH

Never. I know that kind. You'd better clear out.

FIRST SOLDIER

Down with the door!

[*They put their shoulders to it.* BRANDER *makes a sign to* TARRASCH. *They try to pull the men back. There is a scuffle and* BRANDER *is knocked down. He rises with the blood running down his face, while* TARRASCH *still struggles. The door begins to give. A shot is heard within. The men pause and there is another shot.*]

BRANDER

By God, she's done it!

[*There is a booming of distant artillery.*]

Hear!

She was not lying. That came from the southwest. It is the British!

[*A bugle-call sounds in the village street.*]

TARRASCH

The British! A night-attack!

[*They all rush out except* NANKO, *who peers after them from the door. Leaving it open to the night, he takes*

a marron glacé *from the table, crosses the room, and begins to examine the gramophone.*

Confused sounds of men rushing to arms, thin bugle-calls in the distance, and the occasional clatter of a galloping horse are blown in from the blackness framed in the open door. The deep pulsation of the British artillery is heard throughout, in a steady undertone.]

NANKO

[*Calling aloud as he munches.*]

Come, Rada, you're pretending. They're all gone.
Rada, these *marrons glacés* are delicious.
It's over now! Come, I don't think it's right
To spoil a person's pleasure on Christmas Eve.

[*He tiptoes to the door and peers into the night.*]

Come quick, Bettine, rockets are going up!
They are breaking into clusters of green stars!
Oh, there's a red one! You could see for miles
When that one broke. The willow-trees jumped out
Like witches; and, between them, the canal
Dwindled away to a little thread of blood.
And there were lines of men running and falling,
And guns and horses floundering in a ditch.
Oh, Rada! there's a bonfire by the mill.
They've burned the little cottage. There's a man
Hanging above the bonfire by his hands,
And heaps of dead all round him. Come and see!
It's terrible, but it's magnificent,
Like one of Goya's pictures. That's the way
He painted war. Well, everybody's gone. . . .
To think *I* was the fittest, after all!

[*He returns to the gramophone.*]

I wonder how this gramophone does work.
He said the tune that he was putting in
Was just the thing for Christmas Eve. I wonder,
I wonder what it was. Listen to this!

[*He reads the title.*]

It's a good omen, Rada — *A Christmas carol*
Sung by the Grand Imperial Choir — d'you hear? —
At midnight in St. Petersburg — *Adeste*

Fideles! Fancy that! A Christmas carol
Upon a gramophone!
So all the future ages will be sure
To know exactly what religion was.
To think we must not hear it! Rada, they say
The Angel Gabriel composed that tune
On the first Christmas Eve. So don't you think
That we might hear it?
Everybody is gone, except the dead.
It will not wake them. . . .
Come, Rada, you're pretending! Do not make
The war more dreadful than it really is.
[*He accidentally sets the gramophone working and jumps back, a little alarmed. He runs to the bedroom door.*]
Rada! I've started it! Bettine, d'you hear?
The gramophone's working.
[*The artillery booms like a thunder-peal in the distance. Then the gramophone drowns it with the massed voices of the Imperial Choir singing:*]

ADESTE FIDELES,
LÆTI TRIUMPHANTES,
ADESTE, ADESTE IN BETHLEHEM!
NATUM VIDETE
REGEM ANGELORUM:
VENITE, ADOREMUS,
VENITE, ADOREMUS,
VENITE, ADOREMUS DOMINUM.

[NANKO *touches the floor under the door of the bedroom and stares at his hand.*]

NANKO

Something red again? Trickling under the door?
Blood, I suppose. . . .
[*A look of horror comes into his face as he stands listening to the music. Then, as if slowly waking from a dream and almost as if sanity had returned for a moment, he cries:*]
It's true! It's true! Rada, I am awake!

I am awake! And, in the name of Christ,
I accuse, I accuse . . . O God, forgive us all!
[*He falls on his knees by the bedroom door and calls, as if to the dead within:*]
Awake, and after nineteen hundred years. . . .
Bettine, Bettine! the British, they are coming!
Rada, you said it — they are coming quickly!
They are coming, with the reign of right and law.
But, O Bettine! Bettine! will they remember?
Are they awake? I only hear their guns.
What if they should grow used to it, Bettine,
And fail to wipe this horror from the world?
God, is there any hope for poor mankind?
God, are Thy little nations and Thy weak,
Thine innocent, condemned to hell for ever?
God, will the strong deliverers break the sword
And bring this world at last to Christmas Eve?

[*The voices of the Imperial Choir continue:*]

ÆTERNI PARENTIS
SPLENDOREM ÆTERNUM,
VELATUM SUB CARNE VIDEBIMUS,
DEUM INFANTEM,
PANNIS INVOLUTUM,
VENITE, ADOREMUS,
VENITE, ADOREMUS,
VENITE, ADOREMUS DOMINUM.

NANKO

Will Christ be born, Oh, not in Bethlehem,
But in the soul of man, the abode of God?
There, in that deep, undying soul of man
(I still believe it), that immortal soul,
Will they lift up the cross with Christ upon it,
The Fool of God, whom intellectual fools,
The little fools of dust, in every land,
Grinning their *What is Truth?* still crucify.
Could they not thrust their hands into His wounds?
His wounds are these — these dead are all His wounds.

Bettine, Bettine! the British, they are coming!
But you are silent now, so silent now!
Will they lift up God's poor old broken Fool,
And sleep no more until His kingdom come,
His infinite kingdom come?
Will they remember?

[*He bows his head against the closed door, while the gramophone lifts the chorus of the Imperial Choir over the deepening thunder of the guns.*]

NUNC CANTET, EXULTANS,
CHORUS ANGELORUM,
CANTET NUNC AULA CŒLESTIUM
GLORIA, GLORIA,
IN EXCELSIS DEO!
VENITE, ADOREMUS,
VENITE, ADOREMUS,
VENITE, ADOREMUS DOMINUM.

EPILOGUE

INTERCESSION

Now the muttering gun-fire dies,
Now the night has cloaked the slain,
Now the stars patrol the skies,
Hear our sleepless prayer again!
They who work their country's will,
Fight and die for Freedom still,
Soldiers, but not haters, know
Thou must pity friend and foe.
Therefore hear,
Both for foe and friend, our prayer.

Thou whose wounded Hands do reach
Over every land and sea,
Thoughts too deep for human speech
Rise from all our souls to Thee;
Deeper than the wrath that burns
Round our hosts when day returns;
Deeper than the peace that fills

All these trenched and waiting hills.
Hear, O hear!
Both for foe and friend, our prayer.

Pity deeper than the grave
Sees, beyond the death we wield,
Faces of the young and brave
Hurled against us in the field.
Cannon-fodder! They *must* come,
We must slay them, and be dumb,
Slaughter, while we pity, these
Most implacable enemies.
Master, hear,
Both for foe and friend, our prayer.

They are blind, as we are blind,
Urged by duties past reply.
Ours is but the task assigned;
Theirs to strike us ere they die.
Who can see his country fall?
Who but answers at her call?
Who has power to pause and think
When she reels upon the brink?
Hear, O hear,
Both for foe and friend, our prayer.

Shield them from that bitterest lie
Laughed by fools who quote their mirth,
When the wings of death go by
And their brother shrieks on earth.
Though they clamp their hearts with steel,
Conquering *every* fear they feel.
There are dreams they dare not tell.
Shield, O shield, their eyes from hell.
Father, hear,
Both for foe and friend, our prayer.

Where the naked bodies burn,
Where the wounded toss at home,
Weep and bleed and laugh in turn,
Yes, the masking jest may come.

Let him jest who daily dies.
But O hide his haunted eyes.
Pain alone he might control.
Shield, O shield, his wounded soul.
Master, hear,
Both for foe and friend, our prayer.

Peace? We steel us to the end.
Hope betrayed us, long ago.
Duty binds both foe and friend.
It is ours to break the foe.
Then, O God! that we might break
This red Moloch for Thy sake;
Know that Truth indeed prevails,
And that Justice holds the scales.
Father, hear,
Both for foe and friend, our prayer.

England, could this awful hour,
Dawning on thy long renown,
Mark the purpose of thy power,
Crown thee with that mightier crown!
Broadening to that purpose climb
All the blood red wars of Time. . . .
Set the struggling peoples free,
Crown with Law their Liberty!
England, hear,
Both for foe and friend, our prayer!

Speed, O speed what every age
Writes with a prophetic hand.
Read the midnight's moving page,
Read the stars and understand:
Out of Chaos ye shall draw
Deepening harmonies of Law
Till around the Eternal Sun
All your peoples move in one.
Christ-God, hear,
Both for foe and friend, our prayer.

THE NEW MORNING

TO THE MEMORY OF CECIL SPRING-RICE

I

Steadfast as any soldier of the line
He served his England, with the imminent death
Poised at his heart. Nor could the world divine
The constant peril of each burdened breath.

England, and the honour of England, he still served
Walking the strict path, with the old high pride
Of those invincible knights who never swerved
One hair's breadth from the way until they died.

Quietness he loved, and books, and the grave beauty
Of England's Helicon, whose eternal light
Shines like a lantern on that road of duty,
Discerned by few in this chaotic night.

And his own pen, foretelling his release,
Told us that he foreknew "the end was peace."

II

Soldier of England, he shall live unsleeping
Among his friends, with the old proud flag above;
For even today her honour is in his keeping.
He has joined the hosts that guard her with their love.

They shine like stars, unnumbered happy legions,
In that high realm where all our darkness dies.
He moves, with honour, in those loftier regions,
Above this "world of passion and of lies":

For so he called it, keeping his own pure passion
A silent flame before the true and good;

Not fawning on the throng in this world's fashion
To come and see what all might see who would.

Soldier of England, brave and gentle knight,
The soul of Sidney welcomes you tonight.

"THE AVENUE OF THE ALLIES"

This is the song of the wind as it came
Tossing the flags of the nations to flame:
I am the breath of God. I am His laughter.
I am His Liberty. That is my name.

So it descended, at night, on the city.
So it went lavishing beauty and pity,
Lighting the lordliest street of the world
With half of the banners that earth has unfurled;
Over the lamps that are brighter than stars,
Laughing aloud on its way to the wars,
Proud as America, sweeping along
Death and destruction like notes in a song,
Leaping to battle as man to his mate,
Joyous as God when he moved to create,—
Never was voice of a nation so glorious,
Glad of its cause and afire with its fate!
Never did eagle on mightier pinion
Tower to the height of a brighter dominion,
Kindling the hope of the prophets to flame,
Calling aloud on the deep as it came,
Cleave me a way for an army with banners.
I am His Liberty. That is my name.

Know you the meaning of all they are doing?
Know you the light that their soul is pursuing?
Know you the might of the world they are making,
This nation of nations whose heart is awaking?
What is this mingling of peoples and races?
Look at the wonder and joy in their faces!
Look how the folds of the union are spreading!
Look, for the nations are come to their wedding.

How shall the folk of our tongue be afraid of it?
England was born of it. England was made of it,
Made of this welding of tribes into one,
This marriage of pilgrims that followed the sun!
Briton and Roman and Saxon were drawn
By winds of this Pentecost, out of the dawn,
Westward, to make her one people of many;
But here is a union more mighty than any.
Know you the soul of this deep exultation?
Know you the word that goes forth to this nation?
I am the breath of God. I am His Liberty.
Let there be light over all His creation.

Over this Continent, wholly united,
They that were foemen in Europe are plighted.
Here, in a league that our blindness and pride
Doubted and flouted and mocked and denied,
Dawns the Republic, the laughing, gigantic
Europe, united, beyond the Atlantic.
That is America, speaking one tongue,
Acting her epics before they are sung,
Driving her rails from the palms to the snow,
Through States that are greater than Emperors know,
Forty-eight States that are empires in might,
But ruled by the will of one people tonight,
Nerved as one body, with net-works of steel,
Merging their strength in the one Commonweal,
Brooking no poverty, mocking at Mars,
Building their cities to talk with the stars,
Thriving, increasing by myriads again
Till even in numbers old Europe may wane. . . .
How shall a son of the England they fought
Fail to declare the full pride of his thought,
Stand with the scoffers who, year after year,
Bring the Republic their half-hidden sneer?
Now, as in beauty she stands at our side,
Who shall withhold the full gift of his pride?
Not the great England who knows that her son,
Washington, fought her, and Liberty won;
England, whose names like the stars in their station,
Stand at the foot of that world's Declaration.

Washington, Livingston, Langdon, she claims them,
It is her right to be proud when she names them,
Proud of that voice in the night as it came,
Tossing the flags of the nations to flame:
I am the breath of God. I am His laughter.
I am His Liberty. That is my name.

Flags, in themselves, are but rags that are dyed.
Flags, in that wind, are like nations enskied.
See, how they grapple the night as it rolls
And trample it under like triumphing souls.
Over the city that never knew sleep,
Look at the riotous folds as they leap.
Thousands of tri-colors, laughing for France,
Ripple and whisper and thunder and dance;
Thousands of flags for Great Britain aflame
Answer their sisters in Liberty's name.
Belgium is burning in pride overhead.
Poland is near, and her sunrise is red.
Under and over, and fluttering between,
Italy burgeons in red, white, and green.
See, how they climb like adventurous flowers,
Over the tops of the terrible towers. . . .
There, in the darkness, the glories are mated.
There, in the darkness, a world is created.
There, in this Pentecost, streaming on high.
There, with a glory of stars in the sky.
There the broad flag of our union and liberty
Rides the proud night-wind and tyrannies die.

ON THE WESTERN FRONT

(1916)

I

I FOUND a dreadful acre of the dead,
Marked with the only sign on earth that saves.
The wings of death were hurrying overhead,
The loose earth shook on those unquiet graves;

For the deep gun-pits, with quick stabs of flame,
Made their own thunders of the sunlit air;
Yet, as I read the crosses, name by name,
Rank after rank, it seemed that peace was there;

Sunlight and peace, a peace too deep for thought,
The peace of tides that underlie our strife,
The peace with which the moving heavens are fraught,
The peace that is our everlasting life.

The loose earth shook. The very hills were stirred.
The silence of the dead was all I heard.

II

We, who lie here, have nothing more to pray.
To all your praises we are deaf and blind.
We may not ever know if you betray
Our hope, to make earth better for mankind.

Only our silence, in the night, shall grow
More silent, as the stars grow in the sky;
And, while you deck our graves, you shall not know
How many scornful legions pass you by.

For we have heard you say (when we were living)
That some small dream of good would "cost too much."
But when the foe struck, we have watched you giving,
And seen you move the mountains with one touch.

What can be done, we know. But, have no fear!
If you fail now, we shall not see or hear.

VICTORY

(WRITTEN AFTER THE BRITISH SERVICE AT TRINITY CHURCH, NEW YORK)

I

Before those golden altar-lights we stood,
Each one of us remembering his own dead.
A more than earthly beauty seemed to brood
On that hushed throng, and bless each blending head.

Beautiful on that gold, the deep-sea blue
Of those young seamen, ranked on either side,
Blent with the khaki, while the silence grew
Deep, as for wings — Oh, deep as England's pride.

Beautiful on that gold, two banners rose —
Two flags that told how Freedom's realm was made,
One fair with stars of hope, and one that shows
The glorious cross of England's long crusade;

Two flags, now joined, till that high will be done
Which sent them forth to make the whole world one.

II

There were no signs of joy that eyes could see.
Our hearts were all three thousand miles away.
There were no trumpets blown for victory.
A million dead were calling us that day.

And eyes grew blind, at times; but grief was deep,
Deeper than any foes or friends have known;
For O, my country's lips are locked to keep
Her bitterest loss her own, and all her own.

Only the music told what else was dumb,
The funeral march to which all pulses beat;
For all those dead went by, to a muffled drum.
We heard the tread of all those phantom feet.

Yet there was victory! Deep in every soul.
We heard them marching to their unseen goal.

III

There, once again, we saw the Cross go by,
The Cross that fell with all those glorious towers,
Burnt black in France or mocked on Calvary,
Till — in one night — the crosses rose like flowers,

Legions of small white crosses, mile on mile,
Pencilled with names that had outfought all pain,
Where every shell-torn acre seemed to smile —
Who shall destroy the cross that rose again?

Out of the world's mad chaos, where hope perished,
Where all the forms of faith in ruin fell,
Where every sign of heaven that earth had cherished
Shrivelled among the lava-floods of hell,

The eternal Cross that conquers might with right
Rose like a star to lead us through the night.

IV

How shall the world remember? Men forget:
Our dead are all too many even for Fame!
Man's justice kneels to kings, and pays no debt
To those who never courted her acclaim.

Cheat not your heart with promises to pay
For gifts beyond all price so freely given.
Where is the heart so rich that it can say
To those who mourn, "I will restore your heaven"?

But these, with their own hands, laid up their treasure
Where never an emperor can break in and steal,
Treasure for those that loved them past all measure
In those high griefs that earth can never heal,

Proud griefs, that walk on earth, yet gaze above
Knowing that sorrow is but remembered love.

V

Love that still holds us with immortal power,
Yet cannot lift us to His realm of light;
Love that still shows us heaven for one brief hour
Only to daunt the heart with that sheer height;

Love that is made of loveliness entire
In form and thought and act; and still must shame us
Because we ever acknowledge and aspire,
And yet let slip the shining hands that claim us;

O, if this Love might cloak with rags His glory,
Laugh, eat and drink, and dwell with suffering men,
Sit with us at our hearth, and hear our story,
This world — we thought — might be transfigured then.
"But Oh," Love answered, with swift human tears.
"All these things have I done, these many years."

VI

"This day," Love said, "if ye will hear my voice;
I mount and sing with birds in all your skies.
I am the soul that calls you to rejoice.
And every wayside flower is my disguise.

"Look closely. Are the wings too wide for pity?
Look closely. Do these tender hues betray?
How often have I sought my Holy City?
How often have ye turned your hearts away?

"Is there not healing in the beauty I bring you?
Am I not whispering in green leaves and rain,
Singing in all that woods and seas can sing you?
Look, once, on Love, and earth is heaven again.

"O, did your Spring but once a century waken,
The heaven of heavens for this would be forsaken."

VII

There's but one gift that all our dead desire,
  One gift that men can give, and that's a dream,
Unless we, too, can burn with that same fire
  Of sacrifice; die to the things that seem;

Die to the little hatreds; die to greed;
  Die to the old ignoble selves we knew;
Die to the base contempts of sect and creed,
  And rise again, like these, with souls as true.

Nay (since these died before their task was finished)
  Attempt new heights, bring even their dreams to birth: —
Build us that better world, Oh, not diminished
  By one true splendor that they planned on earth.

And that's not done by sword, or tongue, or pen,
There's but one way. God make us better men.

REPUBLIC AND MOTHERLAND

(1912)

(WRITTEN AFTER ENTERING NEW YORK HARBOR AT DAYBREAK)

Up the vast harbor with the morning sun
  The ship swept in from sea;
Gigantic towers arose, the night was done,
  And — there stood Liberty.

Silent, the high torch lifted in one hand,
  The dawn in her proud eyes,
Silent, for all the shouts that vex her land,
  Silent, hailing the skies;

Hailing that mightier Kingdom of the Blest
  Our seamen sought of old,
The dream that lured the nations through the West,
  The city of sunset gold.

Saxon and Norman in one wedded soul
Shook out one flag like fire;
But westward, westward, moved the gleaming goal,
Westward, the vast desire.

Westward and ever westward ran the call,
They followed the pilgrim sun,
Seeking that land which should enfold them all,
And weld all hearts in one.

Here on this mightier continent apart,
Here on these wheat-clad plains,
Swells the first throb of that immortal heart,
The pulse of those huge veins.

Still, at these towers, our old-world cities jest,
And neither hear nor see
The brood of gods at that gigantic breast,
The atoning race to be.

Chosen from many — for no sluggard soul
Confronts that night of stars —
The trumpets of the last Republic roll
Far off, an end to wars;

An end, an end to that wild blood-red age,
That made and keeps us blind;
A mightier realm shall be her heritage,
The union of mankind;

Chosen from many nations, and made one;
But first, O Mother, from thee,
When, following, following on that Pilgrim sun,
The Mayflower crossed the sea.

THE UNION

(1917)

You that have gathered together the sons of all races,
And welded them into one,
Lifting the torch of your Freedom on hungering faces
That sailed to the setting sun;

You that have made of mankind in your own proud regions
The music of man to be,
How should the old earth sing of you, now, as your legions
Rise to set all men free?

How should the singer that knew the proud vision and loved it,
In the days when not all men knew,
Gaze through his tears, on the light, now the world has approved it;
Or dream, when the dream comes true?

How should he sing when the Spirit of Freedom in thunder
Speaks, and the wine-press is red;
And the sea-winds are loud with the chains that are broken asunder
And nations that rise from the dead?

Flag of the sky, proud flag of that wide communion,
Too mighty for thought to scan;
Flag of the many in one, and that last world-union
That kingdom of God in man;

Ours was a dream, in the night, of that last federation,
But yours is the glory unfurled —
The marshalled nations and stars that shall make one nation
One singing star of the world.

GHOSTS OF THE NEW WORLD

"There are no ghosts in America."

THERE are no ghosts, you say,
To haunt her blaze of light;
No shadows in her day,
No phantoms in her night.
Columbus' tattered sail
Has passed beyond our hail.

What? On that magic coast,
Where Raleigh fought with fate,
Or where that Devon ghost
Unbarred the Golden Gate,
No dark, strange, ear-ringed men
Beat in from sea again?

No ghosts in Salem town
With silver buckled shoon?
No lovely witch to drown
Or burn beneath the moon?
Not even a whiff of tea,
On Boston's glimmering quay.

O, ghostly Spanish walls,
Where brown Franciscans glide,
Is there no voice that calls
Across the Great Divide,
To pilgrims on their way
Along the Santa Fe?

Then let your Pullman cars
Go roaring to the West,
Till, watched by lonelier stars,
The cactus lifts its crest.
There, on that painted plain,
One ghost will rise again.

Majestic and forlorn,
Wreck of a dying race,

The Red Man, half in scorn,
  Shall raise his haughty face,
Inscrutable as the sky,
To watch *our* ghosts go by.

What? Is earth dreaming still?
  Shall not the night disgorge
The ghosts of Bunker Hill
  The ghosts of Valley Forge,
Or, England's mightiest son,
The ghost of Washington?

No ghosts where Lincoln fell?
  No ghosts for seeing eyes?
I know an old cracked bell
  Shall make ten million rise
When one immortal ghost
Calls to the slumbering host.

THE OLD MEETING HOUSE

(NEW JERSEY, 1918)

Its quiet graves were made for peace till Gabriel blows his horn.
  Those wise old elms could hear no cry
  Of all that distant agony —
Only the red-winged blackbird, and the rustle of thick ripe corn.

The blue jay, perched upon that bronze, with bright unweeting eyes,
  Could never read the names that signed
  The noblest charter of mankind;
But all of them were names we knew beneath our English skies.

And on the low gray headstones, with their crumbling weather-stains,
  — Though cardinal birds, like drops of blood,

Flickered across the haunted wood,—
The names you'd see were names that woke like flowers in English lanes.

John Applegate was fast asleep; and Temperance Olden, too.
And David Worth had quite forgot
If Hannah's lips were red or not;
And Prudence veiled her eyes at last, as Prudence ought to do.

And when, across that patch of heaven, that small blue leaf-edged space
At times, a droning airplane went,
No flicker of astonishment
Could lift the heavy eyelids on one gossip's upturned face.

For William Speakman could not tell — so thick the grasses grow —
If that strange humming in the sky
Meant that the Judgment Day were nigh,
Or if 'twere but the summer bees that blundered to and fro.

And then, across the breathless wood, a Bell began to sound,
The only Bell that wakes the dead,
And Stockton Signer raised his head.
And called to all the deacons in the ancient burial-ground.

"The Bell, the Bell is ringing! Give me back my rusty sword.
Though I thought the wars were done,
Though I thought our peace was won,
Yet I signed the Declaration, and the dead must keep their word.

"There's only one great ghost I know could make that 'larum ring.
It's the captain that we knew
In the ancient buff and blue,
It's our Englishman, George Washington, who fought the German king!"

So the sunset saw them mustering beneath their brooding
boughs,
Ancient shadows of our sires,
Kindling with the ancient fires,
While the old cracked Bell to southward shook the shadowy
meeting house.

PRINCETON

(1917)

The first four lines of this poem were written for inscription on the first joint memorial to the American and British soldiers who fell in the Revolutionary War. This memorial was recently dedicated at Princeton.

I

Here Freedom stood, by slaughtered friend and foe,
And, ere the wrath paled or that sunset died,
Looked through the ages: then, with eyes aglow,
Laid them, to wait that future, side by side.

II

Now lamp-lit gardens in the blue dusk shine
Through dog-wood red and white,
And round the gray quadrangles, line by line,
The windows fill with light,
Where Princeton calls to Magdalen, tower to tower,
Twin lanthorns of the law,
And those cream-white magnolia boughs embower
The halls of old Nassau.

III

The dark bronze tigers crouch on either side
Where red-coats used to pass,
And round the bird-loved house where Mercer died
And violets dusk the grass,
By Stony Brook that ran so red of old,
But sings of friendship now,
To feed the old enemy's harvest fifty-fold
The green earth takes the plough.

IV

Through this May night if one great ghost should stray
With deep remembering eyes,
Where that old meadow of battle smiles away
Its blood-stained memories,
If Washington should walk, where friend and foe
Sleep and forget the past,
Be sure his unquenched heart would leap to know
Their hosts are joined at last.

V

Be sure he walks, in shadowy buff and blue,
Where those dim lilacs wave,
He bends his head to bless, as dreams come true,
The promise of that grave,
Then with a vaster hope than thought can scan,
Touching his ancient sword,
Prays for that mightier realm of God in man,
"Hasten Thy Kingdom, Lord.

VI

"Land of new hope, land of the singing stars,
Type of the world to be,
The vision of a world set free from wars
Takes life, takes form, from thee,
Where all the jarring nations of this earth.
Beneath the all-blessing sun,
Bring the new music of mankind to birth,
And make the whole world one."

VII

And those old comrades rise around him there,
Old foemen, side by side,
With eyes like stars upon the brave night-air,
And young as when they died,
To hear your bells, O beautiful Princeton towers,
Ring for the world's release.
They see you, piercing like gray swords through flowers,
And smile from hearts at peace.

BEETHOVEN IN CENTRAL PARK

(AFTER A GLIMPSE OF A CERTAIN MONUMENT IN NEW YORK, DURING THE VICTORY CELEBRATION)

The thousand-windowed towers were all alight.
Throngs of all nations filled that glittering way;
And, rich with dreams of the approaching day,
Flags of all nations trampled down the night.
No clouds, at sunset, die in airs as bright.
No clouds, at dawn, awake in winds as gay;
For Freedom rose in that august array,
Crowned with the stars and weaponed for the right.

Then, in a place of whispering leaves and gloom,
I saw, too dark, too dumb for bronze or stone,
One tragic head that bowed against the sky;
O, in a hush too deep for any tomb
I saw Beethoven, dreadfully alone
With his own grief, and his own majesty.

THE PEOPLE'S FLEET

Out of her darkened fishing ports they go,
A fleet of little ships, whose every name —
Daffodil, Sea-lark, Rose and *Surf* and *Snow,*
Burns in this blackness like an altar-flame;

Out of her past they sail, three thousand strong,
The people's fleet that never knew its worth,
And every name is a broken phrase of song
To some remembered loveliness on earth.

There's *Barbara Cowie, Comely Bank* and *May,*
Christened, at home, in worlds of dawn and dew:
There's *Ruth* and *Kindly Light* and *Robin Gray*
With *Mizpah.* (May that simple prayer come true!)

Out of old England's inmost heart they sail,
A fleet of memories that can never fail.

KILMENY

Dark, dark lay the drifters against the red West,
As they shot their long meshes of steel overside;
And the oily green waters were rocking to rest
When Kilmeny went out, at the turn of the tide;
And nobody knew where that lassie would roam,
For the magic that called her was tapping unseen.
It was well-nigh a week ere Kilmeny came home,
And nobody knew where Kilmeny had been.

She'd a gun at her bow that was Newcastle's best,
And a gun at her stern that was fresh from the Clyde,
And a secret her skipper had never confessed,
Not even at dawn, to his newly-wed bride;
And a wireless that whispered above, like a gnome,
The laughter of London, the boasts of Berlin. . . .
O, it may have been mermaids that lured her from home;
But nobody knew where Kilmeny had been.

It was dark when Kilmeny came home from her quest
With her bridge dabbled red where her skipper had died;
But she moved like a bride with a rose at her breast,
And *Well done Kilmeny!* the Admiral cried.
Now, at sixty-four fathom a conger may come
And nose at the bones of a drowned submarine;
But — late in the evening Kilmeny came home,
And nobody knew where Kilmeny had been.

There's a wandering shadow that stares at the foam,
Though they sing all the night to old England, their queen.
Late, late in the evening, Kilmeny came home;
And nobody knew where Kilmeny had been.

CAP'N STORM-ALONG

THEY are buffeting out in the bitter grey weather,
Blow the man down, bullies, blow the man down!
Sea-lark singing to *Golden Feather,*
And burly blue waters all swelling aroun'.
There's *Thunderstone* butting ahead as they wallow,
With death in the mesh of their deep-sea trawl;
There's *Night-Hawk* swooping by wild *Sea-swallow;*
And old Cap'n Storm-along leading 'em all.

Bashing the seas to a welter of white,
Look at the fleet that he leads to the fight.
O, they're dancing like witches to open the ball;
And old Cap'n Storm-along's lord of 'em all.

Now, where have you seen such a bully old sailor?
His eyes are as blue as the scarf at his throat;
And he rolls on the bridge of his broad-beamed whaler,
In yellow sou'wester and oil-skin coat.
In trawler and drifter, in dinghy and dory,
Wherever he signals, they leap to his call;
They batter the seas to a lather of glory,
With old Cap'n Storm-along leading 'em all.

You'll find he's from Devon, the sailor I mean,
Look at his whaler now, shipping it green.
O, Fritz and his "U" boat must crab it and crawl
When old Cap'n Storm-along sails to the ball.

Ay, there is the skipper that knows how to scare 'em.
Blow the man down, bullies, blow the man down!
Look at the sea-wives he keeps in his harem,
Wicked young merry-maids, buxom and brown:
There's *Rosalind,* the sea-witch, and *Gipsy* so lissom,
All dancing like ducks in the teeth of the squall,
With a bright eye for Huns, and a Hotchkiss to kiss 'em;
For old Cap'n Storm-along's lord of 'em all.

Look at him, battering darkness to light!
Look at the fleet that he leads to the fight!
O, hearts that are mighty, in ships that are small,
Your old Cap'n Storm-along's lord of us all.

THE BIG BLACK TRAWLER

The very best ship that ever I knew
— *Ah-way O, to me O* —
Was a big black trawler with a deep-sea crew —
Sing, my bullies, let the bullgine run.

There was one old devil with a broken nose
— *Ah-way O, to me O* —
He was four score years, as I suppose —
But, sing, my bullies, let the bullgine run.

We was wrecked last March, in a Polar storm
— *Ah-way O, to me O* —
And we asked the old cripple if his feet was warm —
Sing, my bullies, let the bullgine run.

And the old, old devil (he was ninety at the most)
— *Ah-way O, to me O* —
Roars, "Ay, warm as a lickle piece of toast"—
So sing, my bullies, let the bullgine run.

"For I soaked my sea-boots and my dungarees
— *Ah-way O, to me O* —
In the good salt water that the Lord don't freeze"—
Oh, sing, my bullies, let the bullgine run.

NAMESAKES

But where's the brown drifter that went out alone?
— *Roll and go, and fare you well* —
Was her name *Peggy Nutten?* That name is my own.
Fare you well, my sailor.

They sang in the dark, "Let her go! Let her go!"
And she sailed to the West, where the broad waters flow;
And the others come back, but . . . the bitter winds blow.
Ah, fare you well, my sailor.

The women, at evening, they wave and they cheer.
—Roll and go, and fare you well—
They're waiting to welcome their lads at the pier.
Fare you well, my sailor.
They're all coming home in the twilight below;
But there's one little boat . . . Let her go! Let her go!
She carried my heart, and a heart for the foe.
Ah, fare you well, my sailor.

The *Nell* and the *Maggie,* the *Ruth* and the *Joan,*
—Roll and go, and fare you well—
They come to their namesakes, and leave me alone.
Fare you well, my sailor.
And names are kep' dark, for the spies mustn't know;
But they'll look in my face, an' I think it will show;
Peggy Nutten's my name. Let her go! Let her go!
Ah, fare you well, my sailor.

WIRELESS

Now to those who search the deep,
Gleam of Hope and Kindly Light,
Once, before you turn to sleep,
Breathe a message through the night.
Never doubt that they'll receive it.
Send it, once, and you'll believe it.

Wrecks that burn against the stars,
Decks where death is wallowing green,
Snare the breath among their spars,
Hear the flickering threads between,
Quick, through all the storms that blind them,
Quick with words that rush to find them.

Think you these aërial wires
  Whisper more than spirits may?
Think you that our strong desires
  Touch no distance when we pray?
Think you that no wings are flying
'Twixt the living and the dying?

Inland, here, upon your knees,
  You shall breathe from urgent lips,
Round the ships that guard your seas,
  Fleet on fleet of angel ships;
Yea, the guarded may so bless them
That no terrors can distress them.

You shall guide the darkling prow,
  Kneeling thus — and far inland —
You shall touch the storm-beat brow
  Gently as a spirit-hand.
Even a blindfold prayer may speed them,
And a little child may lead them.

FISHERS OF MEN

Long, long ago He said,
He who could wake the dead,
  And walk upon the sea —
  "*Come, follow Me.*

"Leave your brown nets and bring
Only your hearts to sing,
  Only your souls to pray,
  Rise, come away.

"Shake out your spirit-sails,
And brave those wilder gales,
  And I will make you then
  Fishers of men."

Was this, then, what He meant?
Was this His high intent,

After two thousand years
Of blood and tears?

God help us, if we fight
For right, and not for might.
God help us if we seek
To shield the weak.

Then, though His heaven be far
From this blind welter of war,
He'll bless us, on the sea
From Calvary.

AN OPEN BOAT

O WHAT is that whimpering there in the darkness?
"Let him lie in my arms. He is breathing, I know.
Look. I'll wrap all my hair round his neck."—"The sea's rising.
The boat must be lightened. He's dead. He must go."

See — quick — by that flash, where the bitter foam tosses,
The cloud of white faces, in the black open boat,
And the wild pleading woman that clasps her dead lover
And wraps her loose hair round his breast and his throat.

"Come, lady, he's dead." "No, I feel his heart beating.
He's living, I know. But he's numbed with the cold.
See, I'm wrapping my hair all around him to warm him"——
—"No. We can't keep the dead, dear. Come, loosen your hold.

"Come. Loosen your fingers."—"O God, let me keep him!"
O, hide it, black night! Let the winds have their way!
For there'll be no voices or ghosts from that darkness,
To fret the bare seas at the breaking of day.

PEACE IN A PALACE

"You were weeping in the night," said the Emperor,
"Weeping in your sleep, I am told."
"It was nothing but a dream," said the Empress;
But her face grew gray and old.
"You thought you saw our German God defeated?"
"Oh, no!" she said. "I saw no lightnings fall.
I dreamed of a whirlpool of green water,
Where something had gone down. That was all.

"All but the whimper of the sea gulls flying.
Endlessly round and round,
Waiting for the faces, the faces from the darkness,
The dreadful rising faces of the drowned.

"It was nothing but a dream," said the Empress.
"I thought I was walking on the sea;
And the foam rushed up in a wild smother,
And a crowd of little faces looked at me.
They were drowning! They were drowning," said the Empress,
"And they stretched their feeble arms to the sky;
But the worst was — they mistook me for their mother,
And cried as my children used to cry.

"Nothing but a whimper of the sea-gulls flying,
Endlessly round and round.
With the cruel yellow beaks that were waiting for the faces,
The little floating faces of the drowned."

"It was nothing but a dream," said the Emperor,
"So why should you weep, dear, eh?"—
"Oh, I saw the red letters on a life belt
That the green sea washed my way!"—
"What were they?" said the Emperor. "What were they?"—
"Some of them were hidden," said the Empress,
"But I plainly saw the L and the U!"
"In God's name, stop!" said the Emperor.
"You told me that it was not true!

"Told me that you dreamed of the sea gulls flying,
Endlessly round and round,
Waiting for the faces, and the eyes in the faces,
The eyes of the children that we drowned.

"Kiss me and forget it," said the Emperor,
"Dry your tears on the tassel of my sword.
I am going to offer peace to my people,
And abdicate, perhaps, as overlord.
I shall now take up My Cross as Count of Prussia—
Which is not a heavy burden, you'll agree.
Why, before the twenty million dead are rotten
There'll be yachting days again for you and me.
Cheer up!
It would mean a rope for anyone but Me."

"Oh, take care!" said the Empress. "They are flying,
Endlessly round and round.
They have finished with the faces, the dreadful little faces,
The little eyeless faces of the drowned."

THE VINDICTIVE

How should we praise those lads of the old *Vindictive*
Who looked Death straight in the eyes,
Till his gaze fell,
In those red gates of hell?

England, in her proud history, proudly enrolls them,
And the deep night in her remembering skies
With purer glory
Shall blazon their grim story.

There were no throngs to applaud that hushed adventure.
They were one to a thousand on that fierce emprise.
The shores they sought
Were armoured, past all thought.

O, they knew fear, be assured, as the brave must know it,
With youth and its happiness bidding their last good-byes;

Till thoughts, more dear
Than life, cast out all fear.

For if, as we think, they remembered the brown-roofed homesteads,
And the scent of the hawthorn hedges when daylight dies,
Old happy places,
Young eyes and fading faces;

One dream was dearer that night than the best of their boyhood,
One hope more radiant than any their hearts could prize,
The touch of your hand,
The light of your face, England!

So, age to age shall tell how they sailed through the darkness
Where, under those high, austere, implacable stars.
Not one in ten
Might look for a dawn again.

They saw the ferry-boats, *Iris* and *Daffodil,* creeping
Darkly as clouds to the shimmering mine-strewn bars,
Flash into light!
Then thunder reddened the night.

The wild white swords of the search-lights blinded and stabbed them,
The sharp black shadows fought in fantastic wars.
Black waves leapt whitening,
Red decks were washed with lightning.

But, under the twelve-inch guns of the black land-batteries
The hacked bright hulk, in a glory of crackling spars,
Moved to her goal
Like an immortal soul;

That, while the raw rent flesh in a furnace is tortured,
Reigns by a law no agony ever can shake,
And shines in power
Above all shocks of the hour.

O, there, while the decks ran blood, and the star-shells lightened
The old broken ship that the enemy never could break,
Swept through the fire
And grappled her heart's desire.

There, on a wreck that blazed with the soul of England,
The lads that died in the dark for England's sake
Knew, as they died,
Nelson was at their side;

Nelson, and all the ghostly fleets of his island,
Fighting beside them there, and the soul of Drake! —
Dreams, as we knew.
Till these lads made them true.

How should we praise you, lads of the old Vindictive,
Who looked death straight in the eyes,
Till his gaze fell
In those red gates of hell?

THE CHIMNEY-SWEEPS OF CHELTENHAM

When hawthorn buds are creaming white,
And the red foolscap all stuck with may,
Then lasses walk with eyes alight,
And it's chimney-sweepers' dancing day.

For the chimney-sweeps of Cheltenham town,
Sooty of face as a swallow of wing,
Come whistling, singing, dancing down
With white teeth flashing as they sing.

And Jack-in-the-green, by a clown in blue,
Walks like a two-legged bush of may,
With the little wee lads that wriggled up the flue
Ere Cheltenham town cried "dancing day."

For brooms were short and the chimneys tall,
And the gipsies caught 'em these black-birds cheap,

So Cheltenham bought them, spry and small,
And shoved them up in the dark to sweep.

For Cheltenham town was cruel of old,
But she has been gathering garlands gay,
And the little wee lads are in green and gold,
For it's chimney-sweepers' dancing day.

And red as a rose, and blue as the sky,
With teeth as white as their faces are black.
The master-sweeps go dancing by,
With a gridiron painted on every back.

But when they are ranged in the market-place,
The clown's wife comes with an iron spoon,
And cozens a penny for her sweet face
To keep their golden throats in tune.

Then, hushing the riot of that mad throng,
And sweet as the voice of a long-dead May,
A wandering pedlar lifts 'em a song,
Of chimney-sweepers' dancing day;

And the sooty faces, they try to recall. . . .
As they gather around in their spell-struck rings. . . .
But nobody knows that singer at all
Or the curious old-time air he sings: —

Why are you dancing, O chimney-sweeps of Cheltenham,
And where did you win you these may-coats so fine;
For some are red as roses, and some are gold as daffodils,
But who, ah, who remembers, now, a little lad of mine?

Lady, we are dancing, as we danced in old England
When the may was more than may, very long ago:
As for our may-coats, it was your white hands, lady,
Filled our sooty hearts and minds with blossom, white as snow.

It was a beautiful face we saw, wandering through Cheltenham.
It was a beautiful song we heard, very far away,

Weeping for a little lad stolen by the gipsies,
Broke our hearts and filled 'em with the glory of the may.

Many a little lad had we, chirruping in the chimney-tops,
Twirling out a sooty broom, a blot against the blue.
Ah, but when we called to him, and when he saw and ran to her,
All our winter ended, and we freed others, too.

Then she gave us may-coats of gold and green and crimson,
Then, with a long garland, she led our hearts away,
Whispering, "Remember, though the boughs forget the hawthorn,
Yet shall I return to you, that was your lady May."—

But why are you dancing now, O chimney-sweeps of Cheltenham,
And why are you singing of a May that is fled? —
O, there's music to be born, though we pluck the old fiddle-strings,
And a world's May awaking where the fields lay dead.

And we dance, dance, dreaming of a lady most beautiful
That shall walk the green valleys of this dark earth one day,
And call to us gently, "O chimney-sweeps of Cheltenham,
I am looking for my children. Awake, and come away."

TO A SUCCESSFUL MAN

(WHAT THE GHOSTS SAID)

And after all the labour and the pains,
After the heaping up of gold on gold,
After success that locked your feet in chains,
And left you with a heart so tired and old,

Strange — is it not? — to find your chief desire
Is what you might have had for nothing then —
The face of love beside a cottage fire
And friendly laughter with your fellow-men?

You were so rich when fools esteemed you poor.
You ruled a field that kings could never buy;
The glory of the sea was at your door;
And all those quiet stars were in your sky.

The nook of ferns below the breathless wood
Where one poor book could unlock Paradise . . .
What will you give us now for that lost good?
Better forget. You cannot pay the price.

You left them for the fame in which you trust.
But youth, and hope — did you forsake them, too?
Courage! When dust at length returns to dust,
In your last dreams they may come back to you.

THE OLD GENTLEMAN WITH THE AMBER SNUFF-BOX

The old gentleman, tapping his amber snuff-box
(A heart-shaped snuff-box with a golden clasp)
Stared at the dying fire. "I'd like them all
To understand, when I am gone," he muttered.
"But how to do it delicately! I can't
Apologize. I'll hint at it . . . in verse;
And, to be sure that Rosalind reads it through,
I'll make it an appendix to my will!"
—Still cynical, you see. He couldn't help it.
He had seen much, felt much. He snapped the snuff-box,
Shook his white periwig, trimmed a long quill pen,
And then began to write, most carefully,
These couplets, in the old heroic style:—

O, had I known in boyhood, only known
The few sad truths that time has made my own,
I had not lost the best that youth can give,
Nay, life itself, in learning how to live.
This labouring heart would not be tired so soon,
This jaded blood would jog to a livelier tune:
And some few friends, could I begin again,
Should know more happiness, and much less pain.

I should not wound in ignorance, nor turn
In foolish pride from those for whom I yearn.
I should have kept nigh half the friends I've lost,
And held for dearest those I wronged the most.

Yet, when I see more cunning men evade
With colder tact, the blunders that I made;
Sometimes I wonder if the better part
Is not still mine, who lacked their subtle art.
For I have conned my book in harsher schools,
And learned from struggling what they worked by rules;
Learned — with some pain — more quickly to forgive
My fellow-blunderers, while they learn to live;
Learned — with some tears — to keep a steadfast mind,
And think more kindly of my own poor kind.

He read the verses through, shaking his wig.
"Perhaps . . . perhaps"— he whispered to himself,
"I'd better leave it to the will of God.
They might upset my own. I do not think
They'd understand.—Jocelyn might, perhaps;
And Dick, if only they were left alone.
But Rosalind never; nor that nephew of mine,
The witty politician. No. No. No.
They'd say my mind was wandering, I'm afraid."
So, with a frozen face, reluctantly,
He tossed his verses into the dying fire,
And watched the sparks fly upward.
There, at dawn,
They found him, cold and stiff, by the cold hearth,
His amber snuff-box in his ivory hand.
"You see," they said, "he never needed friends.
He had that curious antique frozen way.
He had no heart — only an amber snuff-box.
He died quite happily, taking a pinch of snuff."

His nephew, that engaging politician,
Inherited the snuff-box, and remarked
His epitaph should be "Snuffed Out." The clubs
Laughed, and the statesman's reputation grew.

WHAT GRANDFATHER SAID

(AN EPISTLE FROM A NARROW-MINDED OLD GENTLEMAN TO A YOUNG ARTIST OF SUPERIOR INTELLECT AND INTENSE REALISM.)

Your thoughts are for the poor and weak?
Ah, no, the picturesque's your passion!
Your tongue is always in your cheek
At poverty that's not in fashion.

You like a ploughman's rugged face,
Or painted eyes in Piccadilly;
But bowler hats are commonplace,
And thread-bare tradesmen simply silly.

The clerk that sings "God save the King,"
And still believes his Tory paper,—
You hate the anæmic fool? I thought
You loved the weak! Was that all vapour?

Ah, when you sneer, dear democrat,
At such a shiny-trousered Tory
Because he doffs his poor old hat
To what he thinks his country's glory,

To you it's just a coloured rag.
You hate the "patriots" that bawl so.
Well, my Ulysses, there's a flag
That lifts men in Republics also.

No doubt his thoughts are cruder far;
And, where those linen folds are shaking,
Perhaps he sees a kind of star
Because his eyes are tired and aching.

Banal enough! Banal as truth!
But I'm not thinking of his banners.
I'm thinking of his pinched white youth
And your disgusting "new art" manners.

His meek submission stirs your hate?
Better, my lad, if you're so fervent,
Turn your cold steel against the State
Instead of sneering at the servant.

He does his job. He draws his pay.
You sneer, and dine with those that pay him;
And then you write a snobbish play
For democrats, in which you flay him.

Ah, yes, you like simplicity
That sucks its cheeks to make the dimple.
But this domestic bourgeoisie
You hate,— because it's all too simple.

You hate the hearth, the wife, the child,
You hate the heavens that bend above them.
Your simple folk must all run wild
Like jungle-beasts before you love them.

You own a house in Cheyne Walk,
(You say it costs three thousand fully)
Where subtle snobs can talk and talk
And play the intellectual bully.

Yes. I say "snobs." Are names alone
Free from all change? Your word "Victorian"
Could bite and sting in ninety one
But now — it's deader than the saurian.

You think I live in yesterday,
Because I think your way the wrong one;
But I have hewed and ploughed my way,
And — unlike yours — it's been a long one.

I let Victoria toll her bell,
And went with Strindberg for a ride, sir.
I've fought through your own day as well,
And come out on the other side, sir,—

The further side, the morning side,
I read free verse (the Psalms) on Sunday.

But I've decided (you'll decide)
That there is room for song on Monday.

I've seen the new snob on his way,
The intellectual snob I mean, sir,
The artist snob, in book and play,
Kicking his mother round the scene, sir.

I've heard the Tories talk like fools;
And the rich fool that apes the Tory.
I've seen the shopmen break your rules
And die like Christ, in Christ's own glory.

But, as for you, that liberal sneer
Reminds me of the poor old Kaiser.
He was a "socialist," my dear.
Well, I'm your grandson. You'll grow wiser.

IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

I KNOW a sunset shore
Where warm keen incense on the sea-wind blows,
And dim blue ranches (while these March winds roar)
Drown to the roofs in heliotrope and rose;

Deserts of lost delight,
Cactus and palm and earth of thirsty gold,
Dark purple blooms round eaves of sun-washed white
And that Hesperian fruit men sought of old.

The exquisite drought of love
Throbs in that land, drought that forgoes the dew
And all its life-springs, that the boughs above
May bear the fruits for which it thirsts anew.

And those pure mountains rise
Behind it, shutting our sad world away,
With shadowy facets where the sunset dies,
And cliffs like amethyst at the close of day.

An arm's length off they seem
  At dawn, among the sage-brush; but, at noon,
Their angel trails wind upward like a dream,
  And their bright crests grow distant as the moon.

All day, from peaks of snow,
  The dry ravines refresh their tawny drought,
Till, on the grey-green foot-hills, far below,
  Like clusters of white grapes the lamps come out.

Then, breaths of orange-bloom
  Drift over hushed white ranches on the plain,
And spires of eucalyptus cast their gloom
  On brown adobe cloisters of old Spain.

There, green-tressed pepper grows,
  In willowy trees that drop red tassels down,
And carpet the brown road with tints of rose
  Between the palms that aisle the moon-white town.

. . . . . .

Oh, to be wandering there,
  Under the palm-trees, on that sunset shore,
Where the waves break in song, and the bright air
  Is crystal-clean, and peace is ours once more.

There the lost wonder dwells,
  Beauty, reborn in whiteness from the foam;
There Youth returns with all its magic spells,
  And the heart finds its long-forgotten home.

There, in that setting sun,
  On soft white sand the big slow breaker falls.
There brood the huts where West and East are one,
  And the strange air runs wild with elfin calls.

There, gazing far away,
  Those brown-legged fisher-folk, with almond eyes,
Crouch by their nets, and through the rose-tinged spray
  See their own Orient in those deepening skies.

Through fringes of the West,
They see the teeming East, beyond Japan,
Mother of races that, in age-long quest,
Have rounded earth, but end where they began;

End in the strange recall
To that far childhood, that faint flowering past,
Where some dear shade, loved, lost, the first of all,
Opens the door to their dim home at last.

Home,— home! Where is that land,
Beyond the bounds of earth, the old hungering cry
Aches in the soul, drives us from all we planned,
And sets our sail to seek another sky.

NIPPON

Last night, I dreamed of Nippon . . .
I saw a cloud of white
Drifting before the sunset
On seas of opal light.

Beyond the wide Pacific
I saw its mounded snow
Miraculously changing
In that deep evening glow,

To rosy rifts and hillocks,
To orchards that I knew,
To snows of peach and cherry,
And feathers of bamboo.

I saw, on twisted bridges,
In blue and crimson gleams,
The lanterns of the fishers,
Along the brook of dreams.

I saw the wreaths of incense
Like little ghosts arise,
From temples under Fuji,
From Fuji to the skies.

I saw that fairy mountain. . . .
I watched it form and fade.
No doubt the gods were singing,
When Nippon isle was made.

THE HUMMING BIRDS

Green wing and ruby throat,
What shining spell, what exquisite sorcery,
Lured you to float
And fight with bees round this one flowering tree?

Petulant imps of light,
What whisper or gleam or elfin-wild perfume
Thrilled through the night
And drew you to this hive of rosy bloom?

One tree, and one alone,
Of all that load this magic air with spice,
Claims for its own
Your brave migration out of Paradise;

Claims you, and guides you, too,
Three thousand miles across the summer's waste
Of blooms ye knew
Less finely fit for your ethereal taste.

To poets' youthful hearts,
Even so the quivering April thoughts will fly,—
Those irised darts,
Those winged and tiny denizens of the sky.

Through beaks as needle-fine,
They suck a redder honey than bees know.
Unearthly wine
Sleeps in this bloom; and, when it falls, they go.

LINES FOR A SUN-DIAL

With shadowy pen I write,
Till time be done,
Good news of some strange light,
Some far off sun.

THE REALMS OF GOLD

(Written after hearing a line of Keats repeated by a passing stranger under the palms of Southern California.)

Under the palms of San Diego
Where gold-skinned Mexicans loll at ease,
And the red half-moons of their black-pipped melons
Drop from their hands in the sunset seas,
And an incense, out of the old brown missions,
Blows through the orange trees;

I wished that a poet who died in Europe
Had found his way to this rose-red West;
That Keats had walked by the wide Pacific
And cradled his head on its healing breast,
And made new songs of the sun-burned sea-folk,
New poems, perhaps his best.

I thought of him, under the ripe pomegranates
At the desert's edge, where the grape-vines grow,
In a sun-kissed ranch between grey-green sagebrush
And amethyst mountains, peaked with snow,
Or watching the lights of the City of Angels
Glitter like stars below.

He should walk, at dawn, by the lemon orchards,
And breathe at ease in that dry bright air;
And the Spanish bells in their crumbling cloisters
Of brown adobe would sing to him there;
And the old Franciscans would bring him their baskets
Of apple and olive and pear.

And the mandolins, in the deep blue twilight,
Under that palm with the lion's mane,
Would pluck, once more, at his golden heartstrings,
And tell him the old sea-tales of Spain;
And there should the daughters of Hesperus teach him
Their mystical songs again.

Then, the dusk blew sweet over seas of peachbloom;
The moon sailed white in the cloudless blue;
The tree-toads purred, and the crickets chirruped;
And better than anything dreamed came true;
For, under the murmuring palms, a shadow
Passed, with the eyes I knew;

A shadow, perhaps, of the tall green fountains
That rustled their fronds on that glittering sky,
A hungering shadow, a lean dark shadow,
A dreaming shadow that drifted by;
But I heard him whisper the strange dark music
That found it so "rich to die."

And the murmuring palms of San Diego
Shook with stars as he passed beneath.
The Paradise palms, and the wild white orchards,
The night, and its roses, were all one breath,
Bearing the song of a nightingale seaward,
A song that had out-soared death.

COMPENSATIONS

Not with a flash that rends the blue
Shall fall the avenging sword.
Gently as the evening dew
Descends the mighty Lord.

His dreadful balances are made
To move with moon and tide;
Yet shall not mercy be afraid
Nor justice be denied.

The dreams that seemed to waste away,
The kindliness forgot,
Were singing in your heart today
Although you knew them not.

The sun shall not forget his road,
Nor the high stars their rhyme.
The traveller with the heavier load
Has one less hill to climb.

And, though a darker shadow fall
On every struggling age,
How shall it be if, after all,
He share our pilgrimage?

The end we mourn is not the end.
The dust has nimble wings.
But truth and beauty have a friend
At the deep heart of things.

He will not speak? What friend belies
His love with idle breath?
We read it in each others' eyes,
And ask no more in death.

DEAD MAN'S MORRICE

THERE came a crowder to the Mermaid Inn,
One dark May night,
Fiddling a tune that quelled our motley din,
With quaint delight,
It haunts me yet, as old lost airs will do,
A phantom strain:
Look for me once, lest I should look for you,
And look in vain.

In that old wood, where ghosts of lovers walk,
At fall of day,
Gleaning such fragments of their ancient talk
As poor ghosts may,

From leaves that brushed their faces, wet with dew,
Or tears, or rain, . . .
Look for me once, lest I should look for you,
And look in vain.

Have we not seen them — pale forgotten shades
That do return,
Groping for those dim paths, those fragrant glades,
Those nooks of fern,
Only to find that, of the may they knew,
No wraiths remain;
Yet they still look, as I should look for you,
And look in vain.

They see those happier ghosts that waned away —
Whither, who knows? —
Ghosts that come back with music and the may,
And Spring's first rose,
Lover and lass, to sing the old burden through,
Stave and refrain:
Look for me once, lest I should look for you,
And look in vain.

So, after death, if in that starless deep,
I lose your eyes,
I'll haunt familiar places. I'll not keep
Tryst in the skies.
I'll haunt the whispering elms that found us true,
The old grass-grown lane.
Look for me there, lest I should look for you,
And look in vain.

There, as of old, under the dreaming moon,
A phantom throng
Floats through the fern, to a ghostly morrice tune,
A thin sweet song,
Hands link with hands, eyes drown in eyes anew,
Lips meet again. . . .
Look for me, once, lest I should look for you,
And look in vain.

THE OLD FOOL IN THE WOOD

"If I could whisper you all I know,"
Said the Old Fool in the Wood,
"You'd never say that green leaves grow.
You'd say, 'Ah, what a happy mood
The Master must be in today,
To think such thoughts,'
That's what you'd say.

"If I could whisper you all I've heard,"
Said the Old Fool in the fern,
"You'd never say the song of a bird.
You'd say, 'I'll listen, and p'raps I'll learn
One word of His joy as He passed this way,
One syllable more,'
That's what you'd say."

"If I could tell you all the rest,"
Said the Old Fool under the skies,
"You'd hug your griefs against your breast
And whisper with love-lit eyes,
'I am one with the sorrow that made the may,
And the pulse of His heart,'
That's what you'd say."

A NEW MADRIGAL TO AN OLD MELODY

(It is supposed that Shadow-of-a-Leaf uses the word "clear" in a more ancient sense of "beautiful.")

As along a dark pine-bough, in slender white mystery
The moon lay to listen, above the thick fern,
In a deep dreaming wood that is older than history
I heard a lad sing, and I stilled me to learn;
So rarely he lilted his long-forgot litany,—
Fall, April; fall, April, in dew on our dearth!
Bring balm, and bring poppy, bring deep sleepy dittany
For Marian, our clear May, so long laid in earth.

Then I drew back the branches. I saw him that chanted it.
I saw his fool's bauble. I knew his old grief.
I knew that old greenwood and the shadow that haunted it,—
My fool, my lost jester, my *Shadow-of-a-Leaf!*
And "why," I said, "why, all this while, have you left me so
Luckless in melody, lonely in mirth?"
"Oh, why," he sang, "why has this world then bereft me so
Soon of my Marian, so long laid in earth?

"In the years that are gone," he said, "love was more fortunate.
Grief was our minstrel of things that endure.
Now, ashes and dust and this world grow importunate.
Time has no sorrow that time cannot cure.
Once, we could lose, and the loss was worth cherishing.
Now, we may win, but, O, where is the worth?
Memory and true love," he whispered, "are perishing,
With Marian, our clear May, so long laid in earth."

"Ah, no!" I said, "no! Since we grieve for our grief again,
Touch the old strings! Let us try the old stave!
And memory may wake, like my *Shadow-of-a-Leaf* again,
Singing of hope, in the dark, by a grave."
So we sang it together — that long-forgot litany: —
Fall, April; fall, April; bring new grief to birth.
Bring wild herb of grace, and bring deep healing dittany,
For Marian, our clear May, so long laid in earth.

THE LOST BATTLE

It is not over yet — the fight
Where those immortal dreamers failed.
They stormed the citadels of night
And the night praised them — and prevailed.
So long ago the cause was lost
We scarce distinguish friend from foe;
But — if the dead can help it most —
The armies of the dead will grow.

The world has all our banners now,
And filched our watchwords for its own.
The world has crowned the "rebel's" brow
And millions crowd his lordly throne.
The masks have altered. Names are names;
They praise the "truth" that is not true.
The "rebel" that the world acclaims
Is not the rebel Shelley knew.

We may not build that Commonweal.
We may not reach the goal we set.
But there's a flag they dare not steal.
Forward! It is not over yet.
We shall be dust and under dust
Before we end that ancient wrong;
But here's a sword that cannot rust,
And where's the death can touch a song?

So, when our bodies rot in earth
The singing souls that once were ours,
Weaponed with light and helmed with mirth,
Shall front the kingdoms and the powers.
The ancient lie is on its throne,
And half the living still forget;
But, since the dead are all our own,
Courage, it is not over yet.

RIDDLES OF MERLIN

I

As I was walking
Alone by the sea,
"*What is that whisper?*"
Said Merlin to me.
"Only," I answered,
"The sigh of the wave"—
"*Oh, no,*" replied Merlin,
"*'Tis the grass on your grave.*"

As I lay dreaming
In churchyard ground
"*Listen,*" said Merlin,
"*What is that sound?*"
"The green grass is growing."
I answered; but he
Chuckled, "*Oh, no!*
'Tis the sound of the sea."

As I went homeward
At dusk by the shore,
"*What is that crimson?*"
Said Merlin once more.
"Only the sun," I said.
"Sinking to rest"—
"*Sunset for East,*" he said,
"*Sunrise for West.*"

II

Tell me, Merlin,—It is I
Who call thee, after a thousand Springs—
Tell me by what wizardry
The white foam wakes in whiter wings
Where surf and sea-gulls toss and cry
Like sister-flakes, as they mount and fly,
Flakes that the great sea flings on high,
To kiss each other and die.

Tell me, Merlin, tell me why
These delicate things that feast on flowers,
Red Admiral, brown fritillary,
Sister the flowers, yet sail the sky,
Frail ships that cut their cables, yet still fly
The colours we know them by.

Tell me, Merlin, tell me why,
The sea's chaotic colour grows
Into these rainbow fish whose Tyrian dye
In scales of gold and green reply
To blue-striped mackerel waves, to kelp-brown caves,

And deep-sea blooms of gold and green and rose;
Why colours that the sea at random throws
Were ordered into this living harmony,
This little world, no bigger than the hand,
Gliding over the raw tints whence it came,
This opal-bellied patch of sand,
That floats above the sand, or darts a flame
Through woods of crimson lake, and flowers without a name.
See all their tints around its body strewn
In planetary order. Sun, moon, star,
Are not more constant to their tune
Than those light scales of colour are;
Where each repeats the glory of his neighbour,
In the same pattern, with the same delight,
As if, without the artist's labour,
The palette of rich Chaos and old Night
Should spawn a myriad pictures, every line
True to the lost Designer's lost design.

Tell me, Merlin, for what eye
Gathers and grows this cosmic harmony?
Can sea-gulls feed, or fishes brood
On music fit for angels' food?
Did Nescience this delight create
To lure the conger to his mate?
If this be all that Science tells
The narrowest church may peal its bells,
And Merlin work new miracles;
While every dreamer, even as I,
May wonder on, until he die.

THE SYMPHONY

Wonder in happy eyes
Fades, fades away:
And the angel-coloured skies
Whisper farewell.

Loveliness over the strings of the heart may stray
In fugitive melodies;
But Oh, the hand of the Master must not stay,
Even for a breath;

For to prolong one joy, or even to dwell
On one rich chord of pain,
Beyond the pulse of the song, would untune heaven
And drown the stars in death.

So youth with its love-note dies;
And beauty fades in the air,
To make the master-symphony immortal,
And find new life and deeper wonder there.

PEACE

Give me the pulse of the tide again
And the slow lapse of the leaves,
The rustling gold of a field of grain
And a bird in the nested eaves;

And a fishing-smack in the old harbour
Where all was happy and young;
And an echo or two of the songs I knew
When songs could still be sung.

For I would empty my heart of all
This world's implacable roar,
And I would turn to my home, and fall
Asleep in my home once more;

And I would forget what the cities say,
And the folly of all the wise,
And turn to my own true folk this day,
And the love in their constant eyes.

There is peace, peace, where the sea-birds wheel,
And peace in the breaking wave;
And I have a broken heart to heal,
And a broken soul to save.

THE OPEN DOOR

O MYSTERY of life,
That, after all our strife,
  Defeats, mistakes,
Just as, at last, we see
The road to victory,
  The tired heart breaks.

Just as the long years give
Knowledge of how to live,
  Life's end draws near;
As if, that gift being ours,
God needed our new powers
  In worlds elsewhere.

There, if the soul whose wings
Were won in suffering, springs
  To life anew,
Justice would have some room
For hope beyond the tomb,
  And mercy, too.

And since, without this dream
No light, no faintest gleam
  Answers our "why";
But earth and all its race
Must pass and leave no trace
  On that blind sky;

Shall reason close that door
On all we struggled for,
  Seal the soul's doom;
Make of this universe
One wild unanswering curse,
  One lampless tomb?

Mine be the dream, the creed
That leaves for God, indeed,
  For God, and man,

One open door whereby
To prove His world no lie
And crown His plan.

IMMORTAL SAILS

Now, in a breath, we'll burst those gates of gold,
And ransack heaven before our moment fails.
Now, in a breath, before we, too, grow old,
We'll mount and sing and spread immortal sails.

It is not time that makes eternity.
Love and an hour may quite out-span the years,
And give us more to hear and more to see
Than life can wash away with all its tears.

Dear, when we part, at last, that sunset sky
Shall not be touched with deeper hues than this;
But we shall ride the lightning ere we die
And seize our brief infinitude of bliss,

With time to spare for all that heaven can tell,
While eyes meet eyes, and look their last farewell.

THE MATIN-SONG OF FRIAR TUCK

I

If souls could sing to heaven's high King
As blackbirds pipe on earth,
How those delicious courts would ring
With gusts of lovely mirth!
What white-robed throng could lift a song
So mellow with righteous glee
As this brown bird that all day long
Delights my hawthorn tree.

Hark! That's the thrush
With speckled breast
From yon white bush,—
Chaunting his best,—
Te Deum! Te Deum laudamus!

II

If earthly dreams be touched with gleams
Of Paradisal air,
Some wings, perchance, of earth may glance
Around our slumbers there;
Some breaths of may will drift our way
With scents of leaf and loam;
Some whistling bird at dawn be heard
From those old woods of home.
How souls would listen
In those high places!
What tears would glisten
On glorious faces,—
Te Deum! Te Deum laudamus!

III

All, still as frost, the heavenly host
Would touch no golden wire,
If but one cry of joy went by
From this, our greenwood choir:
Then, at one flash of daffodils,
Where those sweet cries resound,
Their heaven would seem the shadowy dream
And earth the holy ground;
Ay, angels then
Would jostle and clamour
To hear the wren
And the yellow-hammer,—
Te Deum! Te Deum laudamus!

IV

For birds by nature must enjoy
The Lord their God for aye;

Therefore their music cannot cloy
As lutes of angels may.
Break, wild-flowers, through the golden floor
Where long-faced martyrs sing.
Then, let the carolling sky-lark soar
And flood their Heaven with Spring.
O, what a pæan
Of joy would shake
The empyrean.
Awake! Awake!—
Te Deum! Te Deum laudamus!

V

No king or priest shall mar my feast
Wherever my soul may range.
I have no fear for heaven's good cheer
Unless our Master change.
But, when death's night is dying away,
If I might choose my bliss,
My love should say, at break of day,
With her first waking kiss:—
"Hark! That's the thrush
With speckled breast,
From yon white bush
Chaunting his best,—
Te Deum! Te Deum laudamus!

FIVE CRITICISMS

(ON MANY RECENT NOVELS BY THE CONVENTIONAL UNCONVENTIONALISTS.)

I

Old Pantaloon, lean-witted, dour and rich,
After grim years of soul-destroying greed,
Weds Columbine, that April-blooded witch
"Too young" to know that gold was not her need.

Then enters Pierrot, young, rebellious, warm,
With well-lined purse, to teach the fine-souled wife

That the old fool's gold should aid a world-reform
(Confused with sex). This wrecks the old fool's life.

O, there's no doubt that Pierrot was clever,
Quick to break hearts and quench the dying flame;
But why, for his own pride, does Pierrot never
Choose his own mate, work for his own high aim,

Stand on his feet, and pay for his own tune?
Why scold, cheat, rob and kill poor Pantaloon?

II

(ON A CERTAIN GODDESS, ACCLAIMED AS "NEW" BUT KNOWN IN BABYLON.)

I saw the assembled artists of our day
Waiting for light, for music and for song.
A woman stood before them, fresh as May
And beautiful; but, in that modish throng,

None heeded her. They said, "In our first youth
Surely, long since, your hair was touched with grey."
"I do not change," she answered. "I am Truth."
"Old and banal," they sneered, and turned away.

Then came a formless thing, with breasts dyed scarlet.
The roses in her hair were green and blue.
"I am new," she said. "I change, and Death knows why."
Then with the eyes and gesture of a harlot
She led them all forth, whinneying, "New, how new!
Tell us your name!" She answered, "The New Lie."

III

(ON CERTAIN OF THE BOLSHEVIK "IDEALISTS.")

With half the force and thought you waste in rage
Over your neighbour's house, or heart of stone,
You might have built your own new heritage,
O fools, have you no hands, then, of your own?

Where is your pride? Is this your answer still,
This the red flag that burns above our strife,
This the new cry that rings from Pisgah hill,
"Our neighbour's money, or our neighbour's life"?

Be prouder. Let us build that nobler state
With our own hands, with our own muscle and brain!
Your very victories die in hymns of hate;
And your own envies are your heaviest chain.

Is there no rebel proud enough to say
"We'll stand on our own feet, and win the day?"?

IV

(ON CERTAIN REALISTS.)

You with the quick sardonic eye
For all the mockeries of life,
Beware, in this dark masque of things that seem,
Lest even that tragic irony,
Which you discern in this our mortal strife,
Trick you and trap you, also, with a dream.

Last night I saw a dead man borne along
The city streets, passing a boisterous throng
That never ceased to laugh and shout and dance:
And yet, and yet,
For all the poison bitter minds might brew
From themes like this, I knew
That the stern Truth would not permit her glance
Thus to be foiled by flying straws of chance,
For her keen eyes on deeper skies are set,
And laws that tragic ironists forget.

She saw the dead man's life, from birth to death,—
All that he knew of love and sin and pain,
Success and failure (not as this world sees),
His doubts, his passions, inner loss and gain,
And borne on darker tides of constant law
Beyond the margin of this life she saw
All that had left his body with the breath.
These things, to her, were still realities.

If any mourned for him unseen,
She saw them, too.
If none, she'd not pretend
His clay were colder, or his God less true,
Or that his grave, at length, would be less green.
She'd not deny
The boundless depths of her eternal sky
Brooding above a boundless universe,
Because he seemed to man's unseeing eye
Going a little further to fare worse;
Nor would she assume he lacked that unseen friend
Whom even the tragic ironists declare
Were better than the seen, in his last end.

Oh, then, beware, beware,
Lest in the strong name of "reality"
You mock yourselves anew with shapes of air,
Lest it be you, agnostics, who re-write
The fettering creeds of night,
Affirm you know your own Unknowable,
And lock the wingéd soul in a new hell;
Lest it be you, lip-worshippers of Truth,
Who break the heart of youth;
Lest it be you, the realists, who fight
With shadows, and forget your own pure light;
Lest it be you who, with a little shroud
Snatched from the sightless faces of the dead,
Hoodwink the world, and keep the mourner bowed
In dust, real dust, with stones, real stones, for bread;
Lest, as you look one eighth of an inch beneath
The yellow skin of death,
You dream yourselves discoverers of the skull
That old *memento mori* of our faith;
Lest it be you who hunt a flying wraith
Through this dissolving stuff of hill and cloud;
Lest it be you who, at the last, annul
Your covenant with your kind;
Lest it be you who darken heart and mind,
Sell the strong soul in bondage to a dream,
And fetter us once more to things that seem.

FIVE CRITICISMS

V

(AN ANSWER)

[After reading an article in a leading London journal by an "intellectual" who attacked one of the noblest poets and greatest artists of a former century (or any century) on the ground that his high ethical standards were incompatible with the new lawlessness. This vicious lawlessness the writer described definitely, and he paid his tribute to dishonour as openly and brutally as any of the Bolsheviki could have done. I had always known that this was the real ground of the latter-day onslaught on some of the noblest literature of the past; but I had never seen it openly confessed before. The time has now surely come when, if our civilization is to make any fight at all against the new "red ruin and breaking up of laws," we must cease to belaud our slack-minded, latter-day "literature of rebellion" for its cleverness in making scraps of paper out of the plain laws of right and wrong. It has been doing this for more than twenty-five years, and the game has become fashionable among those who are too busy to read carefully or understand fully what pitfalls are being prepared for their own feet and the feet of future generations.]

I

If this were true, England indeed were dead.
  If the wild fashion of that poisonous hour
  Wherein the new Salome, clothed with power,
Wriggled and hissed, with hands and feet so red,
Should even now demand that glorious head,
  Whose every word was like an English flower,
  Whose every song an English April shower,
Whose every thought immortal wine and bread;
If this were true, if England should prefer
  Darkness, corruption, and the adulterous crew,
Shakespeare and Browning would cry shame on her,
  And Milton would deny the land he knew;
And those who died in Flanders yesterday
Would thank their God they sleep in cleaner clay.

II

It is not true. Only these "rebel" wings,
  These glittering clouds of "intellectual" flies
  Out of the stagnant pools of midnight rise
From the old dead creeds, with carrion-poisoned stings.

They strike at noble and ignoble things,
Immortal Love with the old world's out-worn lies,
But even now, a wind from clearer skies
Dissolves in smoke their coteries and rings.

See, their divorced idealist re-divorces
The wife he stole from his own stealing friend!
And *these* would pluck the high stars from their courses,
And mock the fools that praise them, till the end!
So, let the whole world praise them. Truth can wait
Till our new England shall unlock the gate.

III

Let the wild throng go paint themselves with woad,
For we've a jest between us, Truth and I.
We know that those who live by fashion die
Also by fashion, and that mode kills mode.
We know the great new age is on the road,
And death is at the heart of every lie.
But we've a jest between us, Truth and I.
And we have locked the doors to our abode.

Yet if some great new "rebel" in his pride
Should pass that way and hear us laughing low
Like lovers, in the darkness, side by side,
He might catch this: — *The dullards do not know*
That names are names. New "rebel" is old "thrall."
And we're the lonely dreamers after all.

THE COMPANIONS

How few are they that voyage through the night
On that eternal quest,
For that strange light beyond our light,
That rest beyond our rest.

And they who, seeking beauty, once descry
Her face, to most unknown;
Thenceforth like changelings from the sky
Must walk their road alone.

So once I dreamed. So idle was my mood;
But now, before these eyes,
From those foul trenches, black with blood,
What radiant legions rise!

And loveliness over the wounded earth awakes
Like wild-flowers in the Spring.
Out of the mortal chrysalis breaks
Immortal wing on wing.

They rise like flowers, they wander on wings of light,
Through realms beyond our ken.
The loneliest soul is companied tonight
By hosts of unknown men.

THE LITTLE ROADS

The great roads are all grown over
That seemed so firm and white.
The deep black forests have covered them.
How should I walk aright?
How should I thread these tangled mazes,
Or grope to that far off light?
I stumble round the thickets, and they turn me
Back to the thickets and the night.

Yet, sometimes, at a word, an elfin pass-word,
(O, thin, deep, sweet with beaded rain!)
There shines, through a mist of ragged-robins,
The old lost April-coloured lane,
That leads me from myself; for, at a whisper,
Where the strong limbs thrust in vain,
At a breath, if my heart help another heart,
The path shines out for me again.

A thin thread, a rambling lane for lovers
To the light of the world's one May,
Where the white dropping flakes may wet our faces
As we lift them to the bloom-bowed spray:

O Master, shall we ask Thee, then, for high-roads,
Or down upon our knees and pray
That Thou wilt ever lose us in Thy little lanes,
And lead us by a wandering way.

SUNLIGHT AND SEA

Give me the sunlight and the sea
And who shall take my heaven from me?
Light of the Sun, Life of the Sun,
O happy, bold companion,
Whose golden laughters round me run,
Making wine of the blue air
With wild-rose kisses everywhere,
Browning the limb, flushing the cheek,
Apple-fragrant, leopard-sleek,
Dancing from thy red-curtained East
Like a Nautch-girl to my feast,
Proud because her lord, the Spring,
Praised the way those anklets ring;
Or wandering like a white Greek maid
Leaf-dappled through the dancing shade,
Where many a green-veined leaf imprints
Breast and limb with emerald tints,
That softly net her silken shape
But let the splendour still escape,
While rosy ghosts of roses flow
Over the supple rose and snow.

But sweetest, fairest is thy face,
When we meet, when we embrace,
Where the white sand sleeps at noon
Round that lonely blue lagoon,
Fringed with one white reef of coral
Where the sea-birds faintly quarrel
And the breakers on the reef
Fade into a dream of grief,
And the palm-trees overhead
Whisper that all grief is dead.

Sister Sunlight, lead me then
Into thy healing seas again . . .
For when we swim out, side by side,
Like a lover with his bride,
When thy lips are salt with brine,
And thy wild eyes flash in mine,
The music of a mightier sea
Beats with my blood in harmony.
I breast the primal flood of being,
Too clear for speech, too near for seeing;
And to his heart, new reconciled,
The Eternal takes his earth-bound child.

Who the essential secret spells
In those gigantic syllables,—
Flowing, ebbing, ebbing, flowing,—
Gathers wisdom past all knowing.
Song of the Sea, I hear, I hear,
That deeper music of the sphere,
Catch the rhythm of sun and star,
And know what light and darkness are;
Ay, faint beginnings of a rhyme
That swells beyond the tides of time;
Beat with thy rhythm in blood and breath,
And make one song of life and death.
I hear, I hear, and rest content,
Merged in the primal element,
The old element whence life arose,
The fount of youth, to which it goes.

Give me the sunlight and the sea
And who shall take my heaven from me?

THE ROAD THROUGH CHAOS

I

THERE is one road, one only, to the Light:
A narrow way, but Freedom walks therein;
A straight, firm road through Chaos and old Night,
And all these wandering Jack-o-Lents of Sin.

It is the road of Law, where Pilate stays
To hear, at last, the answer to his cry;
And mighty sages, groping through their maze
Of eager questions, hear a child reply.

Truth? What is Truth? Come, look upon my tables.
Begin at your beginnings once again.
Twice one is two! Though all the rest be fables,
Here's one poor glimpse of Truth to keep you sane.

For Truth, at first, is clean accord with fact,
Whether in line or thought, or word, or act.

II

Then, by those first, those clean, precise, accords,
Build to the Lord your temples and your song;
The curves of beauty, music's wedded chords
Resolving into heaven all hate and wrong.

Let harmonies of colour marry and follow
And breaking waves in a rhythmic dance ensue;
And all your thought fly free as the wings of the swallow,
Whose arrowy curves obey their measure, too.

Then shall the marching stars and tides befriend you,
And your heart, and the world's heart, pulse in rhyme;
Then shall the mob of the passions that would rend you
Crown you their Captain and march on in time.

So shall you repossess your struggling soul,
Conquer your world, and find the eternal goal.

THE NIGHT OF THE LION

"And that a reply be received before midnight."
BRITISH ULTIMATUM.

THEIR Day was at twelve of the night,
When the graves give up their dead.
And still, from the City, no light
Yellows the clouds overhead.

Where the Admiral stands there's a star,
  But his column is lost in the gloom;
For the brazen doors are ajar,
  And the Lion awakes, and the doom.

He is not of a chosen race.
  His strength is the strength of the skies,
In whose glory all nations have place,
  In whose downfall Liberty dies.
He is mighty, but he is just.
  He shall live to the end of years.
He shall bring the proud to the dust.
  He shall raise the weak to the spheres.

It is night on the world's great mart,
  But the brooding hush is awake
With the march of a steady heart
  That calls like the drum of Drake,
Come! And a muttering deep
  As the pulse of the distant guns,
Or the thunder before the leap
  Thro' the rumbling thoroughfare runs.

And the wounded men go by
  Like thoughts in the Lion's brain.
And the clouds lift on high
  Like the slow waves of his mane.
And the narrowing lids conceal
  The furnaces of his eyes.
Their gold is gone out. They reveal
Only two search-lights of steel
  Steadily sweeping the skies.

And we hoped he had peace in his lair
  Where the bones of old tyrannies lay,
And the skulls that his cubs have stripped bare,
  The old skulls they still toss in their play.
But the tyrants are risen again,
  And the last light dies from their path;
For the midnight of his mane
  Lifts to the stars with his wrath.

From the East to the West he is crouching.
  He snuffs at the North-East wind.
His breast upon Britain is couching.
  His haunches quiver on Ind.
It is night, black night, where he lies;
  But a kingdom and a fleet
Shall burn in his terrible eyes
When he leaps, and the darkness dies
  With the War-gods under his feet.

Till the day when a little child,
  Shall lay but a hand on his mane,
And his eyes grow golden and mild
  And he stands in the heavens again;
Till the day of the seventh seal,
  Which the Lion alone shall rend,
When the stars from their courses reel,
  His Freedom shall not end.

THE WAR WIDOW

I

Black-veiled, black-gowned, she rides in bus and train,
  With eyes that fill too listlessly for tears.
Her waxen hands clasp and unclasp again.
  Good News, they cry. She neither sees nor hears.

Good News, perhaps. may crown some far-off king.
  Good News may peal the glory of the State —
Good News may cause the courts of heaven to ring.
  She sees a hand waved at a garden gate.

For her dull ears are tuned to other themes;
  And her dim eyes can never see aright.
She glides — a ghost — through all her April dreams,
  To meet his eyes at dawn, his lips at night.

Wraiths of a truth that others never knew;
And yet — for her — the only truth that's true.

II

Yet when that Roll of Honour told her first,
In midget print, how all those heroes died,
Though her brain reeled and heart was like to burst,
She heard, she too, the trumpets of their pride.

It seemed as if, with peace, they would return
Like boys from football, shouting "Four to three."
Then, as time passed, slowly she came to learn
How strangely silent all those dead could be.

For this was not like stories in a book;
Not like the fifth act of some splendid play;
This, this thing was for ever. . . . Her soul shook
And stared in terror down that endless way.

Good News! Oh, yes; but, shivering through their cry
She only heard and breathed *Good-bye! Good-bye!*

III

How could she know that these tremendous things
Could all be printed in so small a space?
The headlines flared with footlight queens and kings
And left her dead to his obscurer place.

The line of print that turned her heart to stone,—
How should it vie with knaves or fools for fame?
Let the world pass. Her grief was all her own;
And of the world she had no care or claim.

Why was he slaughtered, then, since no soul cared,
Except herself, whether he lived or died;
Or those that dug some later trench and bared
The old white bones, and had to turn aside.

Bones that were clothed with living flesh of old,
Bones that were hands, and had her hands to hold.

IV

At least, she thought, in face of all these dead,
Mankind would wipe the old lies from heart and brain,
Set a firm heel on those false things we said,
And never rant of earth's rewards again.

Had honour time to count the hosts that stream
So simply through this darkness, down to death?
Heroes lie dumb, while, like an idiot's dream,
Painted balloons dance on the popular breath.

For the bawd Glory crowns with blood-drenched flowers
The first her eyes can seize, rarely the true.
The rest must fade, those nameless hosts of ours,
The obscure brave that never claim their due.

They fade. They fade, for all our shrines and scrolls.
There's no reward for gods, except their souls.

V

Good News! Good News! He perished for the right.
Ah, but to die, an atom in the flood
That tramples myriads down into the night
And drenches half the earth with boyish blood!

Where is the right to heal this deeper wrong,
If night eternal hide the soul that gave;
If silence close the discord, and not song;
And death drag life behind him like a slave?

If but one child be wronged, one love go down,
That fools to come may clutch an idler dream,
Justice may drop her sword and play the clown,
Her court's a mockery in this cosmic scheme.

There is no truth, no cause, no aim secure,
If best things die, while stocks and stones endure

VI

So her soul cried, "There is no way but this.
Out of the night a star begins to rise.
I know not where my soul's deep Master is;
Nor can I hear those angels in the skies;

Nor follow him, as childhood used of old,
By radiant seas, in those time-hallowed tales.
Only, at times, implacable and cold,
From this blind gloom, stand out the iron nails."

Yet, at this world's heart stands the Eternal Cross,
The ultimate frame of moon and star and sun,
Where Love with out-stretched arms, in utter loss,
Points East and West and makes the whole world one.

Good News! Good News! There is no hope, no way,
No truth, no life, but leads through Christmas Day.

THE BELL

The Temple Bell was out of tune,
That once out-melodied sun and moon.

Instead of calling folk to prayer
It spread an evil in the air.

Instead of a song, from north to south,
It put a lie in the wind's mouth.

The very palms beneath it died,
So harsh it jarred, so loud it lied.

Then the gods told the blue-robed bonze:
"Your Bell is only wrought of bronze.

Lower it down, cast it again.
Or you shall shake the heavens in vain."

Then, as the mighty cauldron hissed,
Men brought the wealth that no man missed.

Yea, they brought silver, they brought gold,
And melted them into the seething mould.

The miser brought his greening hoard,
And the king cast in his sword.

Yet, when the Bell in the Temple swung,
It jarred the stars with its harsh tongue.

"Is this your best?" the oracle said,
"Then were you better drunk or dead."

Once again they melted it down,
And the king cast in his crown.

Then they poured wine, and bullock's blood,
Into the hot, grey, seething flood.

They gave it mellowing fruits to eat.
And honey-combs to make it sweet.

Yet, when they hauled it to the sky,
The Bell was one star-shattering lie.

So, for the third time and the last,
They lowered it down to be re-cast.

The white-hot metal seethed anew,
And the crowd shrank as the heat grew;

But a white-robed woman, queenly and tall,
Pressed to the brink before them all,

One breast, like a golden fruit lay bare;
She held her small son feeding there.

She plucked him off, she lifted him high,
Like rose-red fruit on the blue sky.

She pressed her lips to the budded feet.
And murmured softly, *"Oh, sweet, my sweet."*

She whispered, *"Gods, that my land may live,*
I give the best that I have to give!"

Then, then, before the throng awoke,
Before one cry from their white lips broke,

She tossed him into the fiery flood,
Her child, her baby, her flesh and blood.

And the crisp hissing waves closed round
And melted him through without a sound.

"Too quick for pain," they heard her say,
And she sobbed, once, and she turned away.

. . . . . .

The Temple Bell, in peace and war,
Keeps the measure of sun and star.

But sometimes, in the night it cries
Faintly, and a voice replies:

Mother, Oh, mother, the Bell rings true!—
You were all that I had!—Oh, mother, my mother!—
With the land and the Bell it is well. It is well,
Is it well with the heart that had you and none other?

SLAVE AND EMPEROR

"Our cavalry have rescued Nazareth from the enemy whose supermen described Christianity as a creed for slaves."

The Emperor mocked at Nazareth
In his almighty hour.
The Slave that bowed himself to death
And walked with slaves in Nazareth,
What were his words but wasted breath
Before that "will to power"?

Yet, in the darkest hour of all,
When black defeat began,
The Emperor heard the mountains quake,
He felt the graves beneath him shake,
He watched his legions rally and break,
And he whimpered as they ran.

"I hear a shout that moves the earth,
A cry that wakes the dead!
Will no one tell me whence they come,
For all my messengers are dumb?
What power is this that comes to birth
And breaks my power?" he said.

Then, all around his foundering guns,
Though dawn was now not far,
The darkness filled with a living fear
That whispered at the Emperor's ear,
"The armies of the dead draw near
Beneath an eastern star."

The trumpet blows in Nazareth.
The Slave is risen again.
Across the bitter wastes of death
The horsemen ride from Nazareth,
And the Power we mocked as wasted breath
Returns, in power, to reign;
Rides on, in white, through Nazareth,
To save His world again.

ON A MOUNTAIN TOP

On this high altar, fringed with ferns
That darken against the sky,
The dawn in lonely beauty burns
And all our evils die.

The struggling sea that roared below
Is quieter than the dew,
Quieter than the clouds that flow
Across the stainless blue.

On this bare crest, the angels kneel
And breathe the sweets that rise
From flowers too little to reveal
Their beauty to our eyes.

I have seen Edens on the earth
With queenly blooms arrayed;
But here the fairest come to birth,
The smallest flowers He made.

O, high above the sounding pine,
And richer, sweeter far,
The wild thyme wakes. The celandine
Looks at the morning star.

They may not see the heavens unfold.
They breathe no out-worn prayer;
But, on a mountain, as of old,
His glory fills the air.

TOUCHSTONE ON A BUS

Last night I rode with Touchstone on a bus
From Ludgate Hill to World's End. It was he!
Despite the broadcloth and the bowler hat,
I knew him, Touchstone, the wild flower of folly,
The whetstone of his age, the scourge of kings,
The madcap morning star of elfin-land,
Who used to wrap his legs around his neck
For warmth on winter nights. He had slipped back,
To see what men were doing in a world
That should be wiser. He had watched a play,
Read several books, heard men discourse of art
And life; and he sat bubbling like a spring
In Arden. Never did blackbird, drenched with may,
Chuckle as Touchstone chuckled on that ride.
Lord, what a world! Lord, what a mad, mad world!
Then, to the jolt and jingle of the engine,
He burst into this bunch of mad-cap rhymes:—

I

THE NEW DUCKLING

"I want to be new," said the duckling.
"O, ho!" said the wise old owl,
While the guinea-hen cluttered off chuckling
To tell all the rest of the fowl.

"I should like a more elegant figure,"
That child of a duck went on.
"I should like to grow bigger and bigger,
Until I could swallow a swan.

"I *won't* be the bond slave of habit,
I *won't* have these webs on my toes.
I want to run round like a rabbit,
A rabbit as red as a rose.

"I *don't* want to waddle like mother,
Or quack like my silly old dad.
I want to be utterly other,
And *frightfully* modern and mad."

"Do you know," said the turkey, "you're quacking!
There's a fox creeping up thro' the rye;
And, if you're not utterly lacking,
You'll make for that duck-pond. Good-bye!"

But the duckling was perky as perky.
"Take care of your stuffing!" he called.
(This was horribly rude to a turkey!)
"But you aren't a real turkey," he bawled.

"You're an Early-Victorian Sparrow!
A fox is more fun than a sheep!
I shall show that *my* mind is not narrow
And give him my feathers — to keep."

Now the curious end of this fable,
So far as the rest ascertained,
Though they searched from the barn to the stable,
Was that *only his feathers remained.*

So he *wasn't* the bond slave of habit,
And he *didn't* have webs on his toes;
And *perhaps* he runs round like a rabbit,
A rabbit as red as a rose.

II

THE MAN WHO DISCOVERED THE USE OF A CHAIR

The man who discovered the use of a chair,
Odds — bobs —
What a wonderful man!
He used to sit down on it, tearing his hair,
Till he thought of a highly original plan.

For years he had sat on his chair, like you,
Quite — still!
But his looks were grim
For he wished to be famous (as great men do)
And nobody ever would listen to him.

Now he went one night to a dinner of state
Hear! Hear!
In the proud Guildhall!
And he sat on his chair, and he ate from a plate;
But nobody heard his opinions at all;

There were ten fat aldermen down for a speech
(*Grouse! Grouse!*
What a dreary bird!)
With five fair minutes allotted to each,
But never a moment for *him* to be heard.

But, each being ready to talk, I suppose,
Order! Order!
They cried, *for the Chair!*
And, much to their wonder, our friend arose
And fastened his eye on the eye of the Mayor.

"We have come," he said, "to the fourteenth course!
"*High — time,*
for the Chair," he said.
Then, with both of his hands, and with all of his force,
He hurled his chair at the Lord Mayor's head.

It missed that head by the width of a hair.
Gee — whizz!
What a horrible squeak!
But it crashed through the big bay-window there
And smashed a bus into Wednesday week.

And the very next day, in the decorous *Times*
(*Great — Guns —*
How the headlines ran!)
In spite of the kings and the wars and the crimes,
There were five full columns about that man.

ENVOI

Oh, if you get dizzy when authors write
(*My stars!*
And you very well may!)
That white is black and that black is white,
You should sit, quite still, in your chair and say:

It is easy enough to be famous now,
(*Puff — Puff!*
How the trumpets blare!)
Provided, of course, that you don't care how,
Like the man who discovered the use of a chair.

III

COTTON-WOOL

Shun the brush and shun the pen,
Shun the ways of clever men,
When they prove that black is white,
When they swear that wrong is right,
When they roast the singing stars
Like chestnuts, in between the bars,
Children, let a wandering fool
Stuff your ears with cotton-wool.

When you see a clever man
Run as quickly as you can.
You must never, never, never
Think that Socrates was clever.
The cleverest thing I ever knew
Now cracks walnuts at the Zoo.
Children, let a wandering fool
Stuff your ears with cotton-wool.

Homer could not scintillate.
Lincoln, too, was merely great.
That's a very different matter
From talking like a frantic hatter.
Keats and Shelley had no tricks.
Wordsworth never climbed up sticks.
Children, let a wandering fool
Stuff your ears with cotton-wool.

Milton would create a gloom
In many a London drawing-room;
He'd be silent at their wit,
He would never laugh at it.
When they kissed Salome's toes,
I think he'd snort and blow his nose.
Children, let a wandering fool
Stuff your ears with cotton-wool.

They'd curse him for a silly clown,
They'd drum him out of London town.
Professor Flunkey, the historian,
Would say he was a dull Victorian.
Matthew, Mark, and Luke and John,
Bless the bed I rest upon.
Children, let a wandering fool
Stuff your ears with cotton-wool.
Amen.

IV

FASHIONS

Fashion on fashion on fashion
(With only the truth growing old!)
And here's the new purple of passion!
(And Love waiting out in the cold!)
Who'll buy?
They are crying new lamps for Aladdin,
New worlds for the old and the true;
And nobody seems to remember —
The magic was not in the new.

They are hawking a new rose for Eden.
It has feathers. It's green. I suppose
The only thing wrong with their rose is
The fact that it isn't a rose.
Who'll buy?
And here's a new song without metre;
And, here again, nothing is wrong
(For nothing on earth could be neater)
Except that it isn't a song.

An inspired and divine generation
Is flogging, with all of its force
(And unanimous "Rebel" damnation)
A frozen Victorian horse.
Who'll buy?

Yes. It's dead. Here's the hair that deluded
Our grandmother's horrible taste.
But look — and look well — they've included
Some better things, too, in their haste.

Did the anti-macassars abet them?
Were they hidden in sofas of plush?
Did an Anglican bishop forget them,
Or leave them behind in the crush?
Who'll buy?
Here's Tennyson, going quite cheaply.
He propped a stuffed bird in the hall;
And to Lady Cocotte (who thinks deeply)
That settles it, once and for all.

Here's ITEM, a ring, very plain, sirs;
And ITEM, a God (but He's dead).
They say that you'll need Him again, sirs;
So, ITEM, a cross for His head.
Who'll buy?
Yes, they say that He'll rise from the dead, sirs,
It is only the fashions that die;
And — here are the thorns for His head, sirs,
They'll keep till you need 'em. Who'll buy?

THE REWARD OF SONG

Why do we make our music?
Oh, blind dark strings reply:
Because we dwell in a strange land
And remember a lost sky.
We ask no leaf of the laurel,
We know what fame is worth;
But our songs break out of our winter
As the flowers break out on the earth.

And we dream of the unknown comrade,
In the days when we lie dead,
Who shall open our book in the sunlight,
And read, as ourselves have read,

On a lonely hill, by a firwood,
With whispering seas below,
And murmur a song we made him
Ages and ages ago.

If making his may-time sweeter
With dews of our own dead may,
One pulse of our own dead heart-strings
Awake in his heart that day,
We would pray for no richer guerdon,
No praise from the careless throng;
For song is the cry of a lover
In quest of an answering song.

As a child might run to his elders
With news of an opening flower
We should walk with our young companion
And talk to his heart for an hour,
As once by my own green firwood,
And once by a Western sea,
Thank God, my own good comrades
Have walked and talked with me.

Too mighty to make men sorrow,
Too weak to heal their pain
(Though they that remember the hawthorn
May find their heaven again),
We are moved by a deeper hunger;
We are bound by a stronger cord;
For love is the heart of our music,
And love is its one reward.

THE ELFIN ARTIST

AND OTHER POEMS

THE ELFIN ARTIST

In a glade of an elfin forest
When Sussex was Eden-new,
I came on an elvish painter
And watched as his picture grew.
A harebell nodded beside him.
He dipt his brush in the dew.

And it might be the wild thyme round him
That shone in that dark strange ring;
But his brushes were bees' antennæ,
His knife was a wasp's blue sting;
And his gorgeous exquisite palette
Was a butterfly's fan-shaped wing.

And he mingled its powdery colours
And he painted the lights that pass,
On a delicate cobweb canvas
That gleamed like a magic glass,
And bloomed like a banner of elf-land,
Between two stalks of grass;

Till it shone like an angel's feather
With sky-born opal and rose,
And gold from the foot of the rainbow,
And colours that no man knows;
And I laughed in the sweet May weather,
Because of the themes he chose.

For he painted the things that matter,
The tints that we all pass by,
Like the little blue wreaths of incense
That the wild thyme breathes to the sky;

Or the first white bud of the hawthorn,
And the light in a blackbird's eye;

And the shadows on soft white cloud-peaks
That carolling skylarks throw,
Dark dots on the slumbering splendours
That under the wild wings flow,
Wee shadows like violets trembling
On the unseen breasts of snow;

With petals too lovely for colour
That shake to the rapturous wings,
And grow as the bird draws near them,
And die as he mounts and sings; —
Ah, only those exquisite brushes
Could paint these marvellous things.

EARTH AND HER BIRDS

(SHADOW-OF-A-LEAF SINGS)

Brave birds that climb those blue
Dawn-tinted towers,
With notes like showers of dew
From elf-tossed flowers,
Shake your mad wings in mirth,
Betray, betray
The secret thoughts of May,
That heaven, once more, may marry our wild earth.

Dark gipsy, she would dance
Unmated still,
Challenging, glance for glance,
Her lord's high will,
But that her thoughts take wing
While she lies sleeping;
And, into glory leaping,
Like birds, at sunrise, to her bride-groom sing.

See how with cheeks aglow
And lips apart,

While warm winds, murmuring low
  Lay bare her heart,
She dreams that she can hide
  Its rosy light
  In ferns and flowers this night,
And swim like Dian through this hawthorn-tide.

Then shame her, lavrocks, shame her,
  At break of day,
That heaven may trap and tame her
  This mad sweet May.
Let all your feathered choir
  Leave those warm nests
  Between her dawn-flushed breasts,
And soar to heaven, singing her young desire.

MOUNTAIN LAUREL[1]

(A CONNECTICUT POET RETURNS TO HIS HILLS SINGING)

I HAVE been wandering in the lonely valleys,
  Where mountain laurel grows
And, in among the rocks, and the tall dark pine-trees
  The foam of the young bloom flows,
In a riot of rose-white stars, all drenched with the dew-fall,
  And musical with the bee,
Let the fog-bound cities over their dead wreaths quarrel.
  Wild laurel for me!

Wild laurel — mountain laurel —
  Bright as the breast of a cloud at break of day,
White-flowering laurel, wild mountain laurel,
  Rose-dappled snowdrifts, warm with the honey of May!
On the happy hill-sides, in the green valleys of Connecticut,
  Where the trout-streams go carolling to the sea,
I have laughed with the lovers of song and heard them singing
  "Wild laurel for me!"

1 Dedicated to my friends Carl and E. B. Stoeckel, in memory of one of their music festivals at Norfolk, Connecticut.

Far, far away is the throng that has never known beauty,
Or looked upon unstained skies.
Did they think that my songs would scramble for withered bay-leaves
In the streets where the brown fog lies?
They never have seen their wings, then, beating westward,
To the heights where song is free,
To the hills where the laurel is drenched with the dawn's own colours,
Wild laurel for me!

Wild laurel — mountain laurel —
Where Robert o' Lincoln sings in the dawn and the dew,
White-flowering laurel — wild mountain laurel
Where song springs fresh from the heart, and the heart is true!
They have gathered the sheep to their fold, but where is the eagle?
They have bridled their steeds, but when have they tamed the sea,
They have caged the wings, but never the heart of the singer,
" Wild laurel for me!"

If I never should find you again, O, lost companions,
When the rose-red month begins,
With the wood-smoke curling blue by the Indian river,
And the sound of the violins,
In dreams the breath of your green glens would still haunt me,
Where night and her stars, drawing down on blossom and tree,
Turn earth to heaven, and whisper their love till daybreak.
Wild laurel for me!

Wild laurel — mountain laurel —
O, mount again, wild wings, to the stainless blue,
White-flowering laurel, wild mountain laurel,
And all the glory of song that the young heart knew.
I have lived. I have loved. I have sung in the happy valleys,

Where the trout-streams go carolling to the sea,
I have met the lovers of song in the sunset bringing
"Wild laurel for me!"

SEA-DISTANCES

His native sea-washed isle
Was bleak and bare.
Far off, there seemed to smile
An isle more fair.

Blue as the smoke of Spring
Its far hills rose,
A delicate azure ring
Crowned with faint snows,

At dusk, a rose-red star
Set free from wrong,
It beaconed him afar,
His whole life long.

Not till old age drew nigh
He voyaged there.
He saw the colours die
As he drew near.

It towered above him, bleak
And cold, death-cold.
From peak to phantom peak
A grey mist rolled.

Then, under his arched hand,
From that bare shore,
Back, at his own dear land,
He gazed, once more.

Clothed with the tints he knew,
He saw it smile,—
Opal, and rose and blue,
His native isle.

THE INN OF APOLLO

Have you supped at the Inn of Apollo,
While the last light fades from the West?
Has the Lord of the sun, at the world's end,
Poured you his ripest and best?
O, there's wine in that Inn of Apollo;

Wine, mellow and deep as the sunset,
With mirth in it, singing as loud
As the skylark sings in a high wind,
High over a crisp white cloud.
Have you laughed in that Inn of Apollo?

Was the whole world molten in music
At once, by the heat of that wine?
Did the stars and the tides and your own heart
Dance with the heavenly Nine?
For they dance in that Inn of Apollo.

Was their poetry croaked by the sages,
Or born in a whisper of wings?
For the music that masters the ages,
Be sure, is the music that sings!
Yes, they sing in that Inn of Apollo.

THE VICTORIOUS DEAD

I

Now, for their sake, our lands grow lovelier,
There's not one grey cliff shouldering back the sea,
Nor one forsaken hill that does not wear
The visible radiance of their memory.

Our highlands are not lonely as of old;
For all their crags with that pure light are crowned;
And, round our Sussex farms, from fold to fold,
Tread where you will, you tread on haunted ground.

There's not one glen where happy hearts could roam
That is not filled with tenderer shadows now.
There's not one lane that used to lead them home
But breathes their thoughts to-day from every bough.

There's not one leaf on all these quickening trees,
Nor way-side flower but breathes their messages,

II

Now, in the morning of a nobler age,
Though night-born eyes, long-taught to fear the sun,
Would still delay that glorious heritage,
Make firm, O God, the peace our dead have won.

For folly shakes the tinsel on its head
And points us back to darkness and to hell,
Cackling, "*Beware of visions,*" while our dead
Whisper, "*It was for visions that we fell.*"

They never knew the secret game of power.
All that this earth can give they thrust aside.
They crowded all their youth into an hour,
And, for one fleeting dream of right, they died.

Oh, if we fail them, in that awful trust,
How should we bear those voices from the dust?

III

You, broken-hearted, comfort you again!
Eternal Justice guards the gift they gave.
The goal of all that struggling hope and pain
Is not the sophists' universal grave.

Our sun shall perish; but they cannot die.
Their realm of light is far more true than ours.
Behind the veil of earth and sea and sky
They live and move and work with nobler powers.

They have thrust wide open every long-locked portal
Of man's dark mind to that eternal light;

Cast off this flesh in proof of things immortal,
  And built an altar that out-shines our night.

The faith they proved is of immortal worth.
The souls that proved it are not dust and earth.

IV

A little while we may not see their eyes
  Or touch their hands, for they are far too near;
But soul to soul, the life that never dies
  Speaks to the life that waits its freedom here.

They have made their land one living shrine. Their words
  Are breathed in glory from each woodland bough;
And, where the may-tree shakes with song of birds,
  Their young unwhispered joys are singing now.

By meadow and mountain, river and hawthorn-brake,
  In sacramental peace, from sea to sea,
The land they loved grows lovelier for their sake,
  Shines with their hope, enshrines their memory,

Communes with heaven again, and makes us whole,
Through man's new faith in man's immortal soul.

PETER QUINCE

Peter Quince was nine years old,
When he see'd what never was told.

When he crossed the fairy fern,
Peter had no more to learn.

Just as the day began to die,
He see'd 'em rustling on the sky;

Ferns, like small green finger-prints
Pressed against them rosy tints,

Mother-o'-pearl and opal tinges
Dying along their whispering fringes,

Every colour, as it died,
Beaconing, *Come, to the other side.*

Up he crept, by the shrew-mouse track,
A robin chirped, *You woant come back.*

Through the ferns he crept to look.
. . . . . .
There he found a gurt wide book;

Much too big for a child to hold.
Its clasps were made of sunset gold.

It smelled like old ship's timbers do.
He began to read it through.

All the magic pictures burned,
Like stained windows, as he turned

Page by big black-lettered page,
Thick as cream, and ripe with age

There he read, till all grew dim.
Then green glow-worms lighted him.

There he read till he forgot
All that ever his teachers taught.
. . . . . .
Someone, old as the moon, crept back,
Late that night by the shrew-mouse track.

Someone, taller maybe, by an inch.
Boys grow fast. He'll do at a pinch.

Only, folks that know'd him claim
Peter's wits were never the same.

Ev'ryone said that Peter Quince
H'aint been never the same child since.

Now he'd sit, in a trance, for hours,
Talkin' softly to bees and flowers.

Now, in the ingle-nook at night,
Turn his face from the candle-light;

Till, as you thought him fast asleep,
You'd see his eyes were wide and deep;

And, in their wild magic glow,
Rainbow colours 'ud come and go.

Dame Quince never could wholly wake him,
So they say, tho' she'd call and shake him.

He sat dreaming. He sat bowed
In a white sleep, like a cloud.

Over his dim face at whiles,
Flickered liddle elvish smiles.
. . . . . .
Once, the robin at the pane,
Tried to chirp the truth again.

Peter Quince has crossed the fern.
Peter Quince will not return.

Drive the changeling from your chair!
That's not Peter dreaming there.

Peter's crossed the fern to look.
Peter's found the magic book.

Ah, Dame Quince was busy sobbin',
So she couldn't hear poor Robin.

And the changeling, in a dream,
Supped that night, on pears and cream.

Night by night, he cleared his platter;
And — from moon to moon — grew fatter;

Mostly dumb, or muttering dimly
When the smoke blew down the chimley,

Peter's turned another page,
I have almost earned my wage.

Then the good dame's eyelids shone.
. . . . . .
This was many a year agone.
Peter Quince is reading on.

THE GREEN MAN

In those old days at Brighthelmstone,
When art was half Chinese,
And Venus, dipped by Martha Gunn,
Improved the shining seas;
When every dandy walked the Steyne
In something strange and new,
The Green Man,
The Green Man,
Made quite a how-dy-doo.

Green pantaloons, green waistcoat,
Green frock and green cravat,
Green gloves and green silk handkerchief,
Green shoes and tall green hat,—
He took the air in a green gig,
From eight o'clock till ten;
O, the Green Man,
The Green Man,
Was quite successful then.

And though, beneath that golden dome,
That Chinese pup of Paul's,
With snow and azure, rose and foam,
He danced at routs and balls,
Though all the laughing flowers on earth
Around the room he'd swing,

The Green Man,
The Green Man,
Remained a leaf of Spring.

His rooms, they said, his chairs, his bed,
Were green as meadows are.
He dined on hearts of lettuces.
He wore an emerald star.
O, many a fop in blue and gold
His little hour might shine,
Till the Green Man,
The Green Man,
Came strutting up the Steyne.

His name, I think, was William White,
He wished to keep it green.
His fond ambition reached its height
When Brighton's frolic queen,
FitzHerbert, stopped her crimson chair,
And dropped her flirting fan,
With "Tee, hee, hee!
O, look! O, see!
Here comes that odd Green Man!"

Alack, he reached it all too well,
Despite his will to fame,
Thenceforth he shone for beau and belle
By that ambiguous name;
So William White was quite forgot,
By matron, fop, and maid;
Ay, White became
The Green Man;
Became an April shade.

Now, even his green and ghostly gig,
The green whip in his hand,
The green lights in his powdered wig,
Are vanished from the land.
Green livery, darkling emerald star, . . .
Not even their wraiths are seen.

And nobody knows
The Green Man,
Although his grave is green.

THE SILVER CROOK

I was mistuk, once, for the Poape of Roame . . .
The drawled fantastic words came floating down
Behind me, five long years ago, when last
I left the old shepherd, Bramble, by his fold.
Bramble was fond, you'll judge, of his own tales,
And cast a gorgeous fly for the unwary:
But I was late, and could not listen then,
Despite his eager leer.
Yet, many a night,
And many a league from home, out of a dream
Of white chalk coasts, and roofs of Horsham stone,
Coloured like russet apples, there would come
Music of sheep-bells, baaing of black-nosed lambs,
Barking of two wise dogs, crushed scents of thyme,
A silver crook, bright as the morning star,
Above the naked downs.
Then — Bramble's voice,
I was mistuk, once, for the Poape of Roame,
Would almost wake me, wondering what he meant.
Now, five years later, while the larks went up
Over the dew-ponds in a wild-winged glory,
And all the Sussex downs, from weald to sea,
Were patched like one wide crazy quilt, in squares
Of yellow and crimson, clover and mustard-flower,
Edged with white chalk, I found him once again.
He leaned upon his crook, unbudged by war,
Unchanged, and leering eagerly as of old.
How should I paint old Bramble — the shrewd face,
Brown as the wrinkled loam, the bright brown eyes,
The patriarchal beard, the moleskin cap,
The boots that looked like tree-stumps, the loose cloak
Tanned by all weathers,— every inch of him
A growth of Sussex soil. His back was bent

Like wind-blown hawthorn, turning from the sea,
With roots that strike the deeper.
Well content
With all his world, and boastful as a child,
In splendid innocence of the worldling's way,
Whose murderous ego skulks behind a hedge
Of modest privet,— no, I cannot paint him.
Better to let him talk, and paint himself.

"Marnin'," he said; and swept away five years.
Then, with complete dominion over time,
Waiving all prelude, he picked up the thread
We dropped that day, and cast his bait again: —
I was mistuk, once, for the Poape of Roame.—
"Tell me," I said. "Explain. I've dreamed of it."—
"I racken you doan't believe it. Drunken Dick,
'Ull tell you 'tis as true's I'm stannin' here.
It happened along of this old silver crook.
I call it silver 'cos it shines so far.
My wife can see it over at Ovingdean
When I'm on Telscombe Tye. They doan't mek crooks
Like this in Sussex now. They've lost the way
To shape 'em. That's what they French papists knowed
Over at Arundel. They tried to buy
My crook, to carry in church. But I woan't sell 'en.
I've heerd there's magic in a crook like this,—
White magic. Well, I rackon it did save Dick
More ways than one, that night, from the old Black Ram.
I've med a song about it. There was once
A Lunnon poet, down here for his health,
Asked me to sing it to 'un, an' I did.
It med him laff, too. 'Sing it again,' he says
'But go slow, this time.' 'No, I woan't,' I says
(*I* knowed what *he* was trying). 'No,' I says
'I woan't go slow. You'll ketch 'un if I do.'
You see, he meks a tedious mort of money
From these here ballad books, an' I wer'n't goin'
To let these Lunnon chuckle-heads suck my brains.
I med it to thet ancient tune you liked,
The Brown Girl. 'Member it?"

Bramble cleared his throat,
Spat at a bee, leaned forward on his crook,
Fixed his brown eyes upon a distant spire,
Solemnly swelled his lungs, once, twice, and thrice;
Then, like an old brown thrush, began to sing: —

"The Devil turns round when he hears the sound
Of bells in a Sussex foald.
One crack, I rackon, from this good crook
Would make old Scratch leave hoald.
They can't shape crooks to-day like mine,
For the liddle folk helped 'em then.
I've heerd some say as they've see'd 'en shine
From Ditchling to Fairlight Glen.

I loaned 'em a loanst o' my crook one day
To carry in Arundel.
They'd buy 'en to show in their church, they say;
But goald woan't mek me sell.
I never should find a crook so slick,
So silver in the sun;
And, if you talk to Drunken Dick,
He'll tell you what it's done.

You'll find him spannelling round the Plough;
And, Lord! when Dick was young,
He'd drink enough to draown a cow,
And roughen a tiger's tongue.
He'd drink Black Ram till his noäse turned blue,
And the liddle black mice turned white.
You ask 'en what my crook can do,
An' what he see'd that night.

He says, as through the fern he ran
('Twas Pharisees' fern, say I),
A wild potatur, as big as a man,
Arose and winked its eye.
He says it took his arm that night,
And waggled its big brown head,
Then sang: *'This world will never go right
Till Drunken Dick be dead.'*

He shooked it off and, rambling round,
Among the goalden gorse,
He heers a kin' of sneering sound
Pro-ciddin' from a horse,
Which reared upright, then said out loud
(While Dick said, 'I'll be danged!')
'His parents will be tedious proud
When Drunken Dick is hanged!'

I rackon 'twould take a barrel of ale,
Betwix' my dinner and tea,
To mek me see the very nex' thing
That Drunken Dick did see;
For first he thought 'twas elephants walked
Behind him on the Tye,
And then he saw fower ricks of straw
That heaved against the sky.

He saw 'em lift. He saw 'em shift.
He saw gurt beards arise,
He saw 'em slowly lumbering down
A hundred times his size;
And, as he ran, he heer'd 'em say,
Whenever his head he turned,
'This world will never be bright and gay
Till Drunken Dick be burned.'

And then as Dick escaped again
And squirmed the churchyard through,
The cock that crowns the weather-vane
Cried *'How d'ye doodle doo?'*
'Why, how d'ye doodle doo?' says Dick,
'I know why *you* go round.'
'There'll be no luck,' that rooster shruck,
'Till Drunken Dick be drowned!'

And then, as Dick dodged round they barns,
And med for the white chalk coast,
He meets Himself, with the two black horns,
And eyes 'twud mek you roast.

'Walcome! walcome!' old Blackamoor cried,
'Tis muttonless day in hell,
So I think I'll have your kidneys, fried,
And a bit of your liver as well.'

Then Dick he loosed a tarr'ble shout,
And the Devil stopped dead to look;
And the sheep-bells rang, and the moon came out,
And it shone on my silver crook.
'I rackon,' says Dick, 'if you're oald Nick,
You'd batter be scramblin' home;
For *those* be the ringers of Arundel,
And *that* is the Poape of Roame.'"

THE SUSSEX SAILOR

O, ONCE, by Cuckmere Haven,
I heard a sailor sing
Of shores beyond the sunset,
And lands of lasting spring,
Of blue lagoons and palm trees
And isles where all was young;
But this was ever the burden
Of every note he sung: —

O, have you seen my true love
A-walking in that land?
Or have you seen her footprints
Upon that shining sand?
Beneath the happy palm trees,
By Eden whispers fanned . . .
O, have you seen my true love
A-walking in that land?

And, once in San Diego,
I heard him sing again,
Of Amberley, Rye, and Bramber,
And Brede and Fairlight Glen:
The nestling hills of Sussex,
The russet-roofed elfin towns,

And the skylark up in a high wind,
Carolling over the downs.

From Warbleton to Wild Brook
When May is white as foam,
O, have you seen my dearling
On any hills of home?
Or have you seen her shining,
Or only touched her hand,
O, have you seen my true love
A-walking in that land?

And, once again, by Cowfold,
I heard him singing low,
'Tis not the leagues of ocean
That hide the hills I know.
The May that shines before me
Has made a ghost of May.
The valleys that I would walk in
Are twenty years away.

Ah, have you seen my true love
A-walking in that land . . .
On hills that I remember,
In valleys I understand,
So far beyond the sunset,
So very close at hand,—
O, have you seen my true love
In that immortal land?

THE BEE IN CHURCH

The nestling church at Ovingdean
Was fragrant as a hive in May;
And there was nobody within
To preach, or praise, or pray.

The sunlight slanted through the door,
And through the panes of painted glass,

When I stole in, alone, once more
To feel the ages pass.

Then, through the dim grey hush there droned
An echoing plain-song on the air,
As if some ghostly priest intoned
An old Gregorian there.

Saint Chrysostom could never lend
More honey to the heavenly Spring
Than seemed to murmur and ascend
On that invisible wing.

So small he was, I scarce could see
My girdled brown hierophant;
But only a Franciscan bee
In such a bass could chant.

His golden Latin rolled and boomed.
It swayed the altar-flowers anew,
Till all that hive of worship bloomed
With dreams of sun and dew.

Ah, sweet Franciscan of the May,
Dear chaplain of the fairy queen,
You sent a singing heart away
That day, from Ovingdean.

INTERPRETATIONS

If I could sing to Eastland,
As Westland sings to me,
There should be keener sunlight
From English sea to sea.
Much-doubting men should hope again
And breathe a spacious air,
And eyes would turn to Westland
And find their comrades there.

If I could sing to Westland
As Eastland sings to me,
'Twould tinge their skies with mournful dyes
As old as history,
Ironic as the grave, and cold,
With cynic laughter fraught;
And yet — I think the New World
Could use the grief I brought.

I cannot sing to either
What both will understand;
And so I go between the two
And weave a twofold strand.
Perhaps my pains will all be lost,
And both my friends, ere long;
But O, I cannot count the cost
Of that remembering song.

THE IMMIGRANTS

They left the Old World labouring in the night.
They sailed beyond the sunset. They stood dumb
On darkling prows against that westering light
And gazed and dreamed of happier worlds to come.

Darkling and dumb, with hungering eyes they gazed,
Men, women, children, at that wistful sky,
Half-aching for old homes, and half-amazed
At their new courage, as the foam swept by;

Till, towering from this mast-thronged waterway,
Liberty rose, the high torch in her hand;
And each would look at each, and smile, and say,
Is this the land, is this the promised land?

While some looked up, in tears, as if in prayer,
And wondered if all dreams must waste in air.

THE MAYFLOWER

(1620–1920)

I THINK some angel christened her,
  Touched her black bows with dew and flame,
And watched her through the sunset bear
  The light of England's loveliest name:
But O, the Mayflower's not a ship,
Though Heaven, in one great hour, let slip
  Its bloom on one great ship's renown
That sailed three hundred years ago,
  From Plymouth Town to Plymouth Town. . . .

O, little fragrant stars of snow
  That bloom in England, laughing May,
  The sea-wind wafts your scent to-day
  Across three thousand miles of spray.

From winding lane and dark sweet coombe
It wafts the breath of Devon bloom;
For fairer lands have fairer flowers
But this one loveliness is ours,—
This whitener of the hedge in spring,
  These hawthorn buds where, drenched with dew,
The bull-finch and green linnet sing,
  When God makes earth and heaven anew.
And O, the Mayflower's not a name!
It is a soul, a living flame,
Honey-hearted, white as foam,
The glory of the hills of home,
That blooms in all our songs and tales,
And broke into immortal sails,
When tyrannous black-browed tempests freed
The starry-petalled, wingéd seed,
And, over the rough ocean blown
It made new may-boughs of its own.

Hark! To-day the mother-stem
Whispers all her heart to them!

You who doubt her, hear the may
Whispering the wide seas away,—
"What is England, answer ye
Whose heart of heart is Liberty;
For only in such hours as this
Her own may tell of all she is.
Athens, Weimar, Rome, have heard
Her children's glorifying word.
They have praised a hundred lands,
And still kept silence where She stands;
Or, if they turned to her, they said
England slumbers, or is dead.

They have searched her soul with fire
Lest she fail of their desire.
They have lashed her with their blame,
And made a taunt of her own name.
Mockery, anger, careless wit,
With forkéd tongues have struck at it;
Till the stranger in her gate
Wondered at their seeming hate,
And half believed the thing they said,
England slumbers, or is dead.

What is England? Now, at last,
Mightier from that tempering past,
She lifts a prouder head on high,
And her silent deeds reply: —
"I am England, who first gave
Freedom and justice to the slave;
Whose voice and sword and triumphing sea
First gave charters to the free;
Mother of Parliaments, who first broke
Emperors with my thunder-stroke . . .
I am that land, I am that land,
Where Shakespeare's soul and Cromwell's hand,
Milton's faith and Byron's fire,
With Newton's, Darwin's thought conspire
To teach what kings have never known
And lead the peoples to their throne.

Though my feet in evil hours
Failed of the height where my soul towers;
Though I have sinned as ye have sinned,
There is no whisper of any wind
The wide world round, where men stand free,
But tells of my vast agony.
Where have I conquered, and not given
Hostages to my free heaven;
Ay, with its first wild day-spring crowned
Mine equal foe the wide world round;
Till, if again at a king I ride
Mine ancient foes are at my side?

I am England. I am She
Who crowned with law my liberty,
And taught my free-born sons to heed
What I taught kings at Runnymede;
Who, when my tyrants rose again,
Broke every link of every chain,
Flung my may-flower to the seas,
And sailed to the Atlantides.
There was England, in that hour,
The pilgrim soul of all my power,
Which rose like a triumphant flame
And made New England in my name.

Ay, though all souls that live on earth
May mingle in your mightier birth,
There is no senate of free men
But echoes my sea-speech again.
The sea that girds and guards my walls
Thunders in your own council halls;
And my hand against strange kings
Loosed to heaven your eaglet's wings."

Across three thousand miles of spray,
A ghostly ship sets sail to-day.
But O, you living flowers of may,
Fresh with dew, and white as foam,
I hear your murmuring branches say
"This is England. This is home. . . .

This is New England. This is home."

THE MAN THAT WAS A MULTITUDE

As I came up to London, to buy my love a ring,
I passed by a tavern where the painted women sing.
Each of 'em was jigging on a greasy fiddler's knee,
And they cackled at the red rose my true love gave to me;
With their —
"Come and see the silly clown that wears a red rose!
Roses are green now, as everybody knows."

They cackled (how they cackled!) crying everything was new.
The old truths were all false, the new lies were true.
By play, by book, by poem, it was easier to say
A new thing, a false thing, than walk the stricter way.
Singing,
"It was hard, hard to climb, when only truth was true;
But all may violently run, down into the new."

As I came home by Arundel, the wind blew off the sea.
It brought the almond scent of gorse, and there she came to me,
My true love with the young light that gloried in her eyes,
And my soul rose like a giant to the ancient ordered skies,
Laughing,
Let 'em take their green rose, and pickle it in hell,
For I have seen the red rose that blows by Arundel.

My soul rose like a giant, and O but it was sweet
To tumble all its passion like a wave at her feet;
To leave their tricks behind me, and to find myself again
Walking in the clean sun along a Sussex lane,
Singing,
Let 'em hymn their new love that veers with heat and cold,
But I will sing the true love that never shall grow old.

Then, as we walked together, I was quietly aware
Of a mighty throng around us in the hawthorn-scented air,
And I knew it was the simple folk that wait and listen long,

Ere the soul that makes a nation can unite them in a song.
Then,
"Back," they sang, *"to London-town; and we will march with you;*
Because we like the red rose that Eden Garden knew."

But Satan had a vision five-and-thirty years ago,
When Europe lost the great faith and said she didn't know.
He whistled up his wicked dwarfs, from all the nooks of night,
And set 'em to the new trick of proving black is white.
Crying,
"Come, my 'intellectuals.' Trample on the dead.
Trample truth into the dust, and throne yourselves instead."

And so it was that rebel imps, in sooty reds and blues,
And little squint-eyed epigrams with scorpions in their shoes,
And white-hot cinders in their breeks to make 'em act like youth,
Came hopping on their hands from hell, to dance upon the truth,
Squeaking,
"All that you have ever dreamed is ashes now and dust.
God's a force — like heat, we think — and love is only lust."

And some would take to poetry, and roll each other's logs;
But, since their throats were crooked, they could only croak like frogs.
And some would take to sculpture, and the naked Venus died,
As they showed their blocks of marble and declared she slept inside.
Ay,
And others painted pictures like the stern of a baboon;
While their fiddlers, by the tavern, fiddled songs without a tune.

And there we found 'em boasting, "We have mingled earth and sea,
We have planted tare and hemlock where the harvest used to be.

We have broken all the borders, we have neither chart nor
plan."
Then they saw the throng approaching, and behold it was
a Man,
Chuckling,
" England waits and suffers long, as nations often do,
But the Man that is a Multitude has come to answer you."

His head was in the heavens, though his feet were in the
clay.
He rose against the smoke of stars we call the Milky Way.
Three hundred thousand oak-trees had furnished forth his
staff;
And he waved his club above them, as a child might, with
a laugh.
Saying,
" You have sung a strange song, in God's good land!
Who shall deliver you, or save you from my hand?

" O, you have sung a new song, but I will sing an old,
And it shall shine like rubies, and it shall ring like gold!
And you have sung the little songs of mating flea and flea;
But I will sing the great song that thunders like the sea";
Roaring,
" You have sung the red grass, and hymned the purple cow;
And you have asked for justice! Will you kneel and have
it now!"

" We're only Intellectuals," a tiny fiddler squeaked,
" It's not on such as us, you know, that judgment should be
wreaked.
Why, even Mr. Trotsky says, we've hardly helped at all!
We only scratched the mortar out. We didn't smash the
wall.
No! No!
We only thought the reign of law a very poor device.
We only asked for freedom, in a monkey's paradise."

The Man that was a Multitude, he dropped his mighty staff.
" Why, damn your little eyes," he said, " I'm only going to
laugh."

Then, once, and twice, he guffawed, as a Sussex ploughman might,
And the fiddlers and their fancies flew like feathers thro' the night,
Whimpering,
"Is it a Victorian Ghost? Some one that we know?
Ecclefechan Tom himself — could hardly treat us so!"

As I came home by Arundel, my true love walked with me,
And the Man that was a Multitude was singing like the sea,—
O, they have sung their green rose, and pickled it in hell!
But we will sing the red rose that Adam used to smell.
And,
They have sung their new love that veers with heat and cold;
But we will sing the true love that never shall grow old.

THE LAST OF THE SNOW

I

Now, feathered with snow, the fir-tree's beautiful sprays
Pensively nod in the sun, while young April delays,—
"Yes — yes — *we* know
How briefly our hearts with the light of the may-tide shall glow,
Ere the darkness of winter return; and the green boughs and gold
Shall all be choked down by the snow
In the end, as of old.

II

"Yes, white snow, you will have your revenge for the warm dreams that stir
In the sap of my boughs," said the wise old heart of the fir.
"None the less you shall go!
For my brother, the hawthorn, has dreamed of a new kind of snow,

With honey for bees in its heart; and it's worth it, I say,
Though you'll freeze us to death, as we know,
At the end of our day.

III

"There's a glory in fighting for dreams that are doomed to defeat;
So perhaps it's because you'll return that the bloom smells so sweet.
There's our victory, too,
Which you cannot prevent, for we're stronger in one thing than you,
Since we win the one prize that's worth winning, win heaven on earth;
And, if truth remain true,
Find in death our re-birth."

IV

So, feathered with snow, the beautiful boughs of the fir
Dipped to the thaw of the world as the spring touched them there;
And the lane, like a brook,
Sang in the sun, and the pretty girls came out to look,
Saying, "Spring is begun! Look, look, how the snow runs away!
It is only the snow on the fir-tree that seems to delay!"

V

"That's true," said the fir, "and if only the wind of the spring
Would whisper a tale that I know, or a black-bird sing,
I think I might shake off this ghost!"—
"Oh, pouf! If that's all,"
Chuckled the spring-wind, "Listen! I think that's the call
Of a black-bird! And what d'you suppose is that other faint sound—
Snow melting?—leaves budding?—or young lovers whispering all round,
In forest and meadow and city? Oh, yes, they've begun!

Wake up! Tell that spectre to go!"
And the fir-tree listened and shook, and the last of the snow
Slipped from its hold and plumped down on the daffodil bed;
And the green-plumed branches danced for delight in the sun;
And a black-bird alighted, at once, on the bright wet boughs,
And called to his bright-eyed mate on the roof of the shed,
"O, see what a beautiful hiding-place for our house!"
—"That's better," the fir-tree said.

A SPRING HAT

DEAR *Poet of the Sabine farm,*
Whose themes, not all of blood and tears,
Beneath your happy trees could charm
Your lovers for a thousand years,
You would not blame a modern pen
For touching love with mirth again.

For Kit and I went up to town,
And Kit must choose a hat for Spring;
And, though the world may laugh it down,
There is no jollier theme to sing.
Ah, younger, happier than we knew
Into the fairy shop we flew.

Then she began to try them on.
The first one had a golden feather,
That like the godling's arrow shone
When first he pierced our hearts together.
"Now, what d'you think of that," she said,
Tilting it on her dainty head.

The next one, like a violet wreath
Nestled among her fragrant hair;
But O, her shining eyes beneath,
The while she tipped it here and there;
And said, with eager face aglow,
"How do you like it? So? Or so?"

The next one was an elfin crown.
She wore it as Titania might.
She gave the glass a smile, a frown,
And murmured, "No. It isn't *quite!*
I think that other one, the blue,—
Or no, perhaps the green,— don't you?"

Maidens, the haughtiest ever seen,
Like willing slaves around her moved.
They tried the blue. They tried the green.
They trembled when she disapproved;
And, when she waved the pink away,
They tried the lilac and the grey.

She perched the black upon her nose.
She hid an eye behind the blue.
She set the orange and the rose,
With subtle artistry, askew.
She stripped the windows of their store,
Then sent her slaves to search for more.

And while they searched . . . *O, happy face,*
Against the dark eternal night,
If I could paint you with the grace
The Master used! . . . A lovely light
Shone in the laughter of her eyes.
They glowed with sudden sweet surprise.

She saw — the very hat for Spring!
The first one, with the golden feather,
Dropt from a laughing angel's wing
Through skies of Paradisal weather.
She pinned it on her dainty head.
"This is the very thing," she said.

"Now, don't you like me?"—"Yes, I do,"
I said. The slaves were far away.
"Your eyes have never looked so blue."
"I mean the hat," she tried to say.
I kissed her. "Wait a bit," said she.
"There's just one more I want to see."

Who knows but, when the uproar dies,
And mightier songs are dead and gone,
Perhaps her laughing face may rise
Out of the darkness and live on,
If one — who loves — should read and say
This also happened, in that day.

A MEETING

We met, last night.
His eyes were brimmed with light.
I knew him well.
I offered him my hand.
He did not seem to understand
The news I tried to tell
He was so fresh from heaven, I supposed,
And I so scarred from hell.

I was the ghost,
Not he, of hopes long lost.
And he stood there,
My own lost youth, and looked
As if his radiant dreams rebuked
My load of barren care;
I had fulfilled so little, I supposed,
Of promises so fair.

And yet — and yet;
His eyes on mine were set
In a strange glory;
And kneeling at my feet
He whispered, as a child, simple and sweet
Pleads for another story.
"Tell me," he said, "the wonders you have found,
In worlds not transitory."

Then — then — I wept,
And fain I would have kept
My tale untold

But, since he knelt, I said
Bowing my head,
"I have found that truth on earth is bought and sold;
And all the crowns that men desire are worth
Only their weight in gold!"

"And is this all?"
—"Oh, no, this is not all!
I found one light
That never has gone out.
Through all the darkest storms of doubt
It burned as bright;
Yet this was not the glory that we dreamed of,
This faint gleam in the night."

"Yet this must be
The light we longed to see
When prison-bars
Kept our hot boyhood fretting.
Tell me, of that far light which knew no setting
Through those disastrous wars."
He whispered low. I touched his golden head.
"Not far," I said, "but near;
The heaven we held so dear
Shone from our father's house; one lonely light
More constant than the stars."

THE ISLE OF MEMORIES

Was it so in Old England, when kings went to war?
Did the cottages grow silent, as the lads went away,
Leaving all they loved so, the wan face of the mother,
The lips of the young wives, the grey head and the golden,
While birds, in the blackthorn, made ready for the May?

It was even so, even so in Old England.
The homesteads were emptied of happiness and laughter.
The fields were forsaken. The lanes grew lonely.

A shadow veiled the sun. A sea-mist of sorrows
Drifted like a dream through the old oak-forests,
Flowed through our valleys, and filled them with visions,
Brooded on our mountains and crowned them with remembrance,
So that many a wanderer from the shining of the West
Finds a strange darkness in the heart of our land.
Long, long since, in the days of the cross-bow,
Unknown armies from the forge and the farm,
Bought us these fields in the bleakness of death.
The May-boughs budded with the same brief glory;
And, sweetening all the air, in a shower of wet petals,
The black-bird shook them, with to-day's brave song.
His note has not changed since the days of Piers Plowman.
The star has not changed that, as curfew chimed,
In the faint green fields of the sky, like a primrose
Woke, and looked down, upon lovers in the lanes.

Their wild thyme to-night shall be crushed into sweetness,
On the crest of the downs where, dark against the crimson,
Dark, dark as death, on the crimson of the afterglow,
Other lovers wander, on the eve of fare-well,
Other lovers whisper and listen to the sea.

It was even so, even so in Old England.
In all this bleak island, there is hardly an acre,
Hardly a gate, or a path upon the hillside,
Hardly a woodland, that has not heard or seen them
Whispering good-bye, or waving it for ever.
This rain-drenched, storm-rocked earth we adore,
These ripening orchards, these fields of thick wheat
Rippling into grey light and shadow as the wind blows;
These dark rich ploughlands, dreaming in the dusk,
Whose breath in our nostrils is better than life;
This isle of green hedge-rows and deep rambling lanes;
This cluster of old counties that have mellowed through the ages,
Like apples in autumn on a grey apple-tree;
Those moorlands of Cornwall, those mountains of Cumberland,
Ferny coombs of Devonshire and gardens of Kent;

Those russet roofs of Sussex, those farms and faint spires,
Those fields of known flowers, whose faces, whose fragrance,
Even in this darkness, recall our lost childhood,
Sleep like our own children, and cherish us like angels,—
All these are ours, because of the forgotten.

BEAUTY IN DARKNESS

Beauty in darkness,
  Ivory-white
Sleeps like the secret
  Heart of the night.

Night may be boundless,
  Formless as death,
Here the white-breasted one
  Still draws breath.

Music that vanished
  At eve, on the air,
Silently slumbers
  Till day-break here.

Here, at the heart
  Of the universe, glows
Exquisite, absolute,
  Love's deep rose.

HOUSE-HUNTING

I came on a house in Sussex,
  That I should like to own,
A house of old black oak-beams,
  And a roof of Horsham stone,
With beautiful stains of lichen
  And golden browns o'er-grown.

And a deep age-ripened garden,
  As peaceful as the dead,

With a warm grey wall around it
Where peach and pear might spread,
And a mulberry-tree, and a dial;
And roses, white and red.

And over the wall, to the southward,
The roofs of a gabled town,
In a glory of mellowing colour,
Russet and gold and brown;
And, over the wall to the westward,
The church on the naked down.

And over the wall to the northward,
An orchard, fruitful and fair,
With white doves wheeling above it
On the rose-red evening air;
And I thought that my quest was ended,
And dreamed of my new songs there.

But, over the wall to the eastward,
The devil that darkens the sun
Had builded his big new barracks
And ruined what Time had done,
And put out the eyes of beauty
Or ever the song was begun.

So now I must back to London,
And live in a flat, I suppose,
While over earth's loveliest island
The army of villa-dom grows,
In well-drilled regular regiments
And horrible red-brick rows.

For it isn't enough, in our blindness,
That we cannot make new things fair;
But, wherever the old touch lingers
In anything Time can spare,
We must crush it and grind it to powder
And set our heel on it there.

Ah, if I had money to buy it
I would tear their new curse down,

And plant me another orchard
In the face of the Mayor's black frown,
And make my songs in a garden
In the heart of that old-world town.

A BALLAD OF THE EASIER WAY

"ENOUGH of toil," I heard the sculptor cry.
"Why should my passionate soul in chains be led?
Away with smooth conventions! I'll not try
To wrest my Venus from her marble bed.
Let her be buried deep, from foot to head,
In rough-hewn rock, with one toe peeping through.
Suggestion is the finer art," he said;
And, by the by, it looked much easier, too.

"My lady's face," I heard the painter sigh,
"Was mauve as grass, the day that we were wed;
Her shape (she doesn't paint, and can't reply)
Was rambling, like a shell-shocked cattle-shed.
Her fists were like two dimpled rolls of bread;
And, though one eye was green, and one was blue,
I found it took less time to paint them red!"
And, by the by, it looked much easier, too.

I saw the proud composer stand on high.
I heard a shriek that filled my soul with dread,
A wail of tortured cats that clawed the sky,
A chatter of monkeys clamouring to be fed!
Then, as those awful arms arose and spread
I heard a voice—"It's absolutely *New!*
He wastes no time on melody!"—I fled;
For, by the by, it sounded easier, too.

Envoy

Poets, that on Parnassus' height would tread,
With those that sing, beware the formless crew.
You can be free and formless when you're dead;
Though, even to-night, you'd find it easier, too.

CUBISM

I HAVE laughed, but seen it,— under Ditchling Down,
Blue cubes, yellow cubes, crimson cubes and brown.
I have laughed, but seen it,— shouting at the sky,
Crazy as a crazy quilt, over Telscombe Tye:

Cubes of russet ploughland, greying in the sun,
Cubes of honeyed clover, red as blood could run,
Cubes of yellow mustard, clean as hammered gold,
Bleating cubes of clouds or sheep, crammed into a fold.

Clinging to the Sussex downs,— did we crawl like flies?
Ask the proud Antipodes towering to their skies.
I have laughed and seen it, solid in the sun,
All the myriad planes of earth, blocked and wedged in one;

Solid as your flesh and bones, blocked with bits of sea,
Squared with dusky semi-tones, and cubed with mystery,
Planes of Anglo-Saxon art, planes of modern mirth,
From an aeroplane above — or below — the earth.

Butting through the solid blue like a submarine;
While my eyelids clung to cubes of blue and gold and green,
Till the level meadows rose, upright to the sky,
And we looped the loop again, over Telscombe Tye.

A DEVONSHIRE SONG

IN Devonshire now they sing no more
At market or fair or plough.
There are no deep cider-songs to roar
In the red-earth country now.
The roofs are slate instead of thatch
And the tall young lads are gone.
You may pull the bobbin and lift the latch,
But the old farm-dance is done

Yet the blackbird sings in the old apple-tree
As in Uncle Tom Cobley's day;
And snow — white snow — in a Devonshire night,
Is only the bloom on the spray.
There'll be pocket-fulls, bag-fulls, barn-fulls yet,
When the ships come home from say.
For a good cob-wall, and a good hat and shoes,
And a good heart last for aye.

They say that love's more fickle of wing
Than it was in the days gone by;
But a Devonshire lane dives deep in the spring,
Ere it lifts through the fern to the sky.
As it was in the days of good Queen Bess
It shall be in the age to come,
When the sweet of the year's in the cider-press,
And the whistling maid turns home.

For the south wind comes, and it brings wet weather,
And the west is cloaked with grey,
And a whistling maid and a crowing hen
Are wicked as frost in May;
But snow — white snow — in a Devonshire night,
Is only the bloom on the spray,
And a good cob-wall, and a good hat and shoes,
And a good heart last for aye.

They say that Devon has fought her fight,
They say that she, too, grows old.
But the wind blew south upon New Year's night
And the moon had a ring of gold:
And a dripping June puts all in tune
For harvest, as well as we know;
So here's to thee, old apple-tree,
Thou'lt bear good apples enow.

There were apples to spare for the Golden Hinde,
When she sailed from Plymouth Bay;
And, though Widdecombe folk be picking their geese,
There'll be apples to spare to-day;

For snow — white snow — in a Devonshire night,
Is only the bloom on the spray,
And a good cob-wall, and a good hat and shoes,
And a good heart last for aye.

A DEVONSHIRE CHRISTMAS

I

How goes it, Father Christmas? —
Oh — picking — picking along!
But give me a piece of crumple-cheese
And you shall hear my song.
Ay, settle your chestnuts down to roast,
And fill me a cup of ale;
Then kiss the girl that you fancy most,
And you shall hear my tale.

Chorus.

Froth him a cup of the home-brewed
That is both old and strong!
How goes it, Father Christmas? —
Oh — picking — picking along.

II

From Adam and Eve to the Magi,
The ghosts of the old time fade;
And I, myself, would be laid on the shelf
If it weren't for the mirth I've made:
And yet, tho' our youth in Paradise
Be a fable past recall,
We have seen the glory of sinless eyes,
And we have watched the Fall.

Chorus.

So fables may be fancies,
And yet not very far wrong!
How goes it, Father Christmas?
Oh — picking — picking along!

III

I walked last night on Dartmoor,
The wind was bitterly cold,
My crimson cloak was a thread-bare joke,
And my bones were brittle and old.
I had forgotten the world's desire
And all the stars were dead,
When I sank right up to my knees in mire,
At the door of a cattle-shed.

Chorus.

I saw the oldest oxen
That ever knew goad or thong;
Their sweet breath smoked in the frosty light
Of the lanthorn that I swung.

IV

I saw those oxen kneeling,
So gentle and dumb and wise,
By a child that lay in the straw and smiled
At their big dark shining eyes!
While a woman breathed "*lullay, lullay,*"
The Magi need not roam
So long ago, so far away,
When heaven is born at home.

Chorus.

Then all my heart sang "Gloria"
I lacked no angel throng,
As over the lonely moor I went,
Picking, picking along.

V

And over the farm on the whistling fells
I saw the great star glide;
And "Peace on earth" rang Modbury bells,
And Ermington bells replied.

How goes it, Father Christmas?
Was the burden of all their song;
And what could a Devonshire pedlar say
But "Picking — picking along."

Chorus.

He needs a cloak and a pair of shoes,
But his heart is young and strong!
How goes it, Father Christmas?
Oh — picking — picking along.

THE BRIDE-ALE

A Man

WHICH is the way that the barn-dance goes?

A Maid

First stand up in two straight rows.

A Man

Every Jack must face his Jill.

The Music

Whether he won't or whether he will.

A Maid

What is the song that shall be sung?

The Music

A tale of a wedding when all was young.

A Man

How shall the dance and the song begin?

The Music

Hands across, and down the middle!

A Maid

Bring the bride and the bridegroom in.

A Man

Now, then, fiddler! Talk to your fiddle!

Chorus of Bride's-maids

Dew — dew — on the wild hill-side,
Dew on the thyme and the clover,
And we are coming to busk the bride
In the great red dawn, with the sky-lark carolling,
Carolling, carolling over.

The dew is bright on the red hill-brow,
Although the sun be spreading;
So we must walk in our bare feet now,
And save our shoes — with the sky-lark carolling —
Save our shoes for the wedding.

Dew — dew — and a song to be sung so.
Dew — dew — and a peal to be rung so.
Dew — dew — and the world growing young, so
Early in the morning!

The cows are crunching flowers and dew,
Their long blue shadows are dwining.
Their hooves are gold with the butter-cup dust
(There's gold, wet gold on your ankles, too)
And their coats like silk are shining.

Dew — dew — and a dance in the spray of it
Dew — dew — and a light in the grey of it.
Dew — dew — and a bride in the way of it,
Waking at dawn to be married.

Now, quick with the jessamine crown for her head!
Too long, my dear, you've tarried;
And I hope that we all may blush so red
On the day that we walk — with the sky-lark carolling —
Walk through the dew to be married.

It is only an English song we sing
For, O, we know no Latin!

But your shoulder is shaped like a sea-bird's wing,
Milk-white in the wave of your tumbling tresses
And soft as a queen's white satin.

Medea used wild herbs, they say
To tangle the heart of Jason.
We bring three pails of the dew of the may,
Dew of the white-thorn, dew of the black-thorn,
Dew of the wild thyme, dew of the lavender,
Dew of the ox-lip, clover, and marigold,
Dew that we wrung with our hands from the meadow-sweet
To pour into your bason.

Dew — dew — and a song to be sung so.
Dew — dew — and a peal to be rung so.
Dew — dew — and the world growing young, so
Come, sweet May, to be married.

A Bride's-maid

This dance it will no further go.

The Music

I pray you, madam, why say you so?

A Bride's-maid

Because Joan Hedges begins to repent.

The Music

She can't repent, and she shan't repent.
Love in the hedge-rows laughs at Lent.

Chorus of Groom's-men

The muscadine waits for the bride at the church.
Lead her along to the aisle.
Parson is waiting to hop on his perch,
And sexton is trying to smile.
Parson is waiting (though Adam and Eve
Kissed without asking his pardon)
To shepherd the two into Eden anew
And give 'em the keys of the garden.

Quick, let the gown that is white as the Spring's,
All in array for the fray,
Drift like the mist of the dawn as it clings
Hiding the bloom of the may.
Fasten it there, on her shoulder, but O,
Joan, if you shrug it or falter
Now, you'll be married in roses and snow;
So quick, come along to the altar.

A Groom's-man

This dance it will no further go.

The Music

I pray you, good sir, why say you so?

A Groom's-man

Because John Appleby's half afraid.

The Music

And that's no answer to make to a maid.

A Groom's-man

What shall we do? He is shivering still.

The Music

Parson 'ull preach, on the text *Aprille*.

The Parson

The love-songs that the Frenchmen pipe
I never could long abide.
They are all too curious or too ripe
To troll at the hawthorn-tide.
As for those *Epithalamions*
Which learned poets sing,
Their Phyllidariddles and Corydons —
They have well-nigh spoiled the Spring.

Hymen — the God that rules the roast,
As master Shakespeare knew,
They have turned to a turnip-lanthorn ghost,
And a thumping hypocrite, too.

For either they whisper with tongues like snakes
Of a secret purple sin;
Or else they are burning the hawthorn brakes
And welcoming old age in.

What do they know of the song Love sings,
Passion, or music's beat,
Who wish to dance with feet like wings,
Yet cannot steer their feet?
For life's a dance, and none has known
It's pulsing rapturous breath,
Who dances unto himself alone
And never vowed — *till death.*

General Chorus

The sermon is over and now you may kiss,
Kiss, without asking for pardon.
The cherubs are swinging the gates of your bliss
Wide upon Paradise garden.
Spikenard, saffron, cinnamon, blow,
Blow through the beautiful boughs there.
Solomon said it (to Sheba, you know)
And Sheba — why, *she* had a house there.

Dew — dew — and a dance in the spray of it.
Dew — dew — and a light in the grey of it.
Dew — dew — and a bride in the way of it,
Waking at dawn to be married.

THE UNCHANGING

"All songs are sung, numbered all flowers," they said,
"In some unearthly far-off isle — who knows? —
Perchance the unvisited lyric blossom blows
Whence all that primal lustre is not fled,
Nor dimmed the ambrosial dew that crowned its birth
Where the pure fourfold river of Eden flows."

Then, since my soul was living and not dead,
Through a lych-gate I went into a grave-yard,
And, for the first, yet millionth, time on earth,
I saw — thank God — the rose!

II

"The world is changed"— unchanged the blue heaven smiled —
"Truth is not Truth, Love is not Love," they said,
"Laughter and Joy in their simplicity
Lie dead beneath yon old patched robe, the sea!
Gird up your loins, run swifter than the wind,
It may be we shall leave yon old blue heaven behind!"
Then, since my soul was living and not dead,
I went into a great miraculous meadow,
And laughed, with a little child.

BEAUTIFUL ON THE BOUGH

Beautiful on the bough
The song-thrush in summer-time
Carelessly sings.

Beautiful under the bough
The silent thrush in winter-time
Lies with stiffened wings.

Who, ah, who shall sing or say
Why there comes to careless-hearted joy
A thing so still and great as death?

If the gods feared that happiness would cloy,
Surely a slighter sadness would repay
That little debt,

That debt of harmless gladness!
Why must the lightest creature that draws breath
Go down this tragic way,

Assume the awful majesty of a fate
Worthy a god; if it were not . . . God, Christ,
Return, return, Compassionate,

We have rejected Thee,
Who saidst that not one should be sacrificed,
We have rejected Thee, but not the fact,

This terrible naked fact, which if it be
Unanswered, blackens earth and sky and sea . . .
This tiny body, mocking the blind sun,
Postulates Thy divine philosophy,
Not one shall fall to the earth, not one, not one.

AS WE FORGIVE

Before Thy children, Lord, were fully grown,
They bowed like suppliants at their Maker's throne
And prayed, like slaves, that mercy might be shown.

They knelt before Thee, pleading in the night,
That Thou wouldst wash their scarlet raiment white.
Now, in the dawn, at last they stand upright.

Not with irreverent hearts, yet unafraid,
The silent, helpless myriads Thou hast made,
Give Thee the gifts for which, of old, they prayed:

Compassion for the burden Thou must bear;
And, though they know not why these evils were,
Their mute forgiveness for the griefs they share.

Yes, for one human grief that still must be
Too sad for heaven, too tragical for Thee,
Who even in death wast sure of victory;

For those farewells that darken our brief day,
The child struck down, the young love torn away,
And those dear hopes that kiss us to betray;

For perishing youth, for beauty's fading eyes;
For all Thyself hast given us in such wise
That, ere we grasp its loveliness, it dies,

Dies and despite our faith, we are not sure.
Our love, oh God, was never so secure
As Thine, in Thy strong heaven which must endure.

So, in our human weakness, for the scorn
And scourging, for the bitter cross of thorn
That this dark earth, from age to age has borne,

We — Thy clay creatures — warped and marred and blind,
Stretch out our arms at last, and bid Thee find
Rest to Thy soul, in crucified mankind.

Come to us! Leave Thy deathless realms on high.
We tell Thee, as our dumb dark myriads die,
We do absolve Thee, with our last sad cry.

THE MAKING OF A POEM

Last night a passionate tempest shook his soul
With hatred and black anger and despair,
And the dark depths and every foaming shoal
Ran wild as if they fought with the blind air.

To-day the skies unfold their flags of blue,
The crisp white clouds their sails of snow unfurl,
And, on the shore, in colours rich and new
The strange green seas cast up their loosened pearl.

TO AN "UNPRACTICAL MAN"

No — no — the cynics rule, for all our creeds.
Dreams are vain dreams, and deeds are brutal deeds.
Why should they hear you? Have they ever heard?
How should you triumph where gods have striven in vain,

How break with your weak hands the world-wide chain?
Were not the chained souls first to mock your word?

Yet — since you must — work out the old sad plan.
Prove, once again, the bounds God set for man.
Strive for your dream of good and watch it die.
Fail utterly; but O, welcome that defeat,
For there — as this world fades — you, too, shall meet
In absolute night, the eyes of Victory.

CHRISTMAS, 1919

Christmas, and peace on earth; an Eastern tale
Of shepherds and a star,—
Can these things, in our mocking age, avail
A world grown old in war?

Since Galileo opened up a night
Too deep for hope to scan,
The starry heavens no longer wheel their light
To serve the need of man.

There are no wings in that unfathomed gloom,
Where now our eyes behold,
World without end, and orderly as doom,
The mist of suns unfold.

Yet, to fulfil, not to destroy the law,
The modern mages rose;
And, round the deeper centre that they saw,
A vaster cosmos flows.

Oh, for a Galileo of the mind
To pierce this inner night;
And, deeper than our deepest dreams, to find
The light beyond our light;

Where angels sing, though not to the fleshly ear,
As over Bethlehem's Inn.
Turn to thine own deep soul, if thou wouldst hear.
The Kingdom is within.

Eternal Lord, in whom we live and move;
Whose face we cannot see;
Soul of the Universe, whose names are Love,
And Law, and Liberty;

Confirm our peace! There is no peace on earth,
No song in our dark skies.
Only in souls the Christ is brought to birth,
And there He lives and dies.

DISTANT VOICES

Remember the house of thy father,
When the palaces open before thee,
And the music would make thee forget.
When the cities are glittering around thee,
Remember the lamp in the evening,
The loneliness and the peace.

When the deep things that cannot be spoken
Are drowned in a riot of laughter,
And the proud wine foams in thy cup;
In the day when thy wealth is upon thee,
Remember thy path through the pine-wood,
Remember the ways of thy peace.

Remember — remember — remember —
When the cares of this world and its treasure
Have dulled the swift eyes of thy youth;
When beauty and longing forsake thee,
And there is no hope in the darkness,
And the soul is drowned in the flesh;

Turn, then, to the house of thy boyhood,
To the sea and the hills that would heal thee,
To the voices of those thou hast lost,
The still small voices that loved thee,
Whispering, out of the silence,
Remember — remember — remember —

Remember the house of thy father,
Remember the paths of thy peace.

FOR A BOOK OF TALES

If there be laughter, here and there, in a story
Written when songs were dead, in a dreadful hour;
Remember, at least, that men may laugh in the darkness
Where tears are not to be borne.

O, if there be any beguilement in these my shadows
Caught — as they walked the world — in a net of dreams;
Remember, at least, that the best of all my music
Was this — that my songs were dead.

If there be tragical shadows walking amongst them,
The darkest shadow of all has merciful hands;
And whispers — low in your heart — O, yet remember,
That shadows are children of light.

So — take them, walking their ways as I saw and drew them,
Shadows from British coasts and from over the sea,
From Sussex to Maine, from Maine to the City of Angels,
Whence the sunset returns as the dawn.

A SKY SONG

The Devil has launched his great grey craft
To voyage in the sky;
But Life puts out with a thousand wings,
To rake His Majesty fore and aft
And prove that Wrong must die.

So has it been since time began,—
When Death would mount and fly,
A swifter fleet, with sharper stings,
Round him in lightning circles ran
And proved that Death must die.

Invincible, he came of old.
  His galleons towered on high;
But Drake and his companions bold
  And this proud sea that laughs and sings
    Declared that Death must die.

So all these four free winds declare
  And these pure realms of sky;
And these new admirals of the air,
  Ay, Life with all her radiant wings
    Declares that Death must die.

A RETURN FROM THE AIR

Set the clocks going,
  Turn on the light.
Is that the old sea flowing
  Out there, in the night?
We have come back from faërie,
  To the world where Time still plods.
We have returned from an airy
  Ramble with the gods.

There are few changes showing.
  The fire shines bright.
But — set the clocks going.
  Turn on the light.
No, we have nothing to tell you
  That you would care to be told.
No, we have nothing to sell you
  That ever was bought with gold.

Ah, never look at our faces
  Till we forget our skies,
Or the gleam of the holy places
  Has faded from our eyes.
But — set the clocks going.
  Turn on the light,
Outside the winds are blowing.
  Shut the doors tight.

Is it an age or a minute
That we have been away?
We have lived an æon in it,
That is all we dare to say.
Our knowledge was past all knowing.
Our seeing was past all sight.
But — set the clocks going.
Turn on the light.

COURT-MARTIAL

All along the lovers' lane
Nelly Cobb and I went laughingly.
When I kissed her,—"Do't again,"
So she'd say, pert-like and chaffingly.

It was moonlight, and we walked
Whispering of the bliss in store for us
Little dreamed I, as we talked,
That the future held no more for us.

Round and rosy chin held high,
Buckled shoes and gown of tiffany,
"Banns 'ull soon be up," thought I,
"We'll be married next epiphany!"

Then the war came, wiping out
All the course that Love had charted us.
Germany was wrong, no doubt.
Well, I 'listed, and that parted us.

Now, at dawn, they'll shoot me dead,
Since my nerve, before the enemy,
Broke, as the court-martial said,
(Wonder if she'll think agen o' me!)

I was just a volunteer.
Now she'll marry Joe, no doubt of it.
He's there — striking. Life is queer.
Did my best, and now I'm out of it.

How Joe grinned the day I went,
  Called me fool, and stood, saluting me.
P'raps I was. I thought it meant
  Something — better. Well, they're shooting me.

All this happened in one flash!
  Sight may go, and who thinks less of you?
But, by God, if nerves go crash
  When your pal's blood makes a mess of you,

Then God leaves you in the lurch.
  Weakness there is worse than knavery.
Joke 'ull be at home, in church,
  When the vicar lauds my bravery.

None will know how I was killed.
  I'll be mentioned as heroical;
Nelly 'ull cry, and say she's thrilled.
  Husband Joe will sit there, stoical.

Life's a funny kind of play.
  All the love and hope and youth of it,—
Chucked like so much dirt away;
  And there's no one knows the truth of it.

A VICTORY DANCE

The cymbals crash,
  And the dancers walk,
With long silk stockings
  And arms of chalk,
Butterfly skirts,
  And white breasts bare,
And shadows of dead men
  Watching 'em there.

Shadows of dead men
  Stand by the wall,
Watching the fun
  Of the Victory Ball.

They do not reproach,
Because they know,
If they're forgotten,
It's better so.

Under the dancing
Feet are the graves.
Dazzle and motley,
In long bright waves,
Brushed by the palm-fronds
Grapple and whirl
Ox-eyed matron,
And slim white girl.

Fat wet bodies
Go waddling by,
Girdled with satin,
Though God knows why;
Gripped by satyrs
In white and black,
With a fat wet hand
On the fat wet back.

See, there is one child
Fresh from school,
Learning the ropes
As the old hands rule.
God, how that dead boy
Gapes and grins
As the tom-toms bang
And the shimmy begins.

"What did you think
We should find," said a shade,
"When the last shot echoed
And peace was made?"
"Christ," laughed the fleshless
Jaws of his friend,
"I thought they'd be praying
For worlds to mend,

"Making earth better,
Or something silly,
Like white-washing hell
Or Picca-dam-dilly.
They've a sense of humour,
These women of ours,
These exquisite lilies,
These fresh young flowers!"

"Pish," said a statesman
Standing near,
"I'm glad they can busy
Their thoughts elsewhere!
We mustn't reproach 'em.
They're young, you see."
"Ah," said the dead men,
"So were we!"

Victory! Victory!
On with the dance!
Back to the jungle
The new beasts prance!
God, how the dead men
Grin by the wall,
Watching the fun
Of the Victory Ball.

THE RHYTHM OF LIFE

"Come back, to the tidal sun,"
The Angel of Morning said.
"There are no more songs to be won
From the sad new pulseless dead;
But the pine-wood throbs with the truth
It sang to the heart of a boy!
Come back, to the hills of youth,
Enjoyer and giver of joy.

"Come back, to the tidal sea
And its great storm-guiding tune,

By the service of law set free
To sing with the sun and the moon;
To pulse with the blood and the breath,
And to ebb ere the flow can cloy,
In the rhythm of life and death,
Enjoyer and giver of joy."

TO CERTAIN PHILOSOPHERS

After all the dreaming, the laughter and the tears,
Comes a tramp of armies, a shock of naked spears.

After all the loving, with lips and eyes a-light,
Comes the iron slumber, and the endless night.

After all the singing, and all that souls can pray,
Comes the empty silence, closing all with *Nay;*

After all the "progress," the day when all is told,
When the stars are darkened, and the sun is cold.

Ah, my latter sophists, if your creed were true,
Gods, if gods existed, well might kneel to you.

You have found the one thing that gods have never heard;
Found what hell despaired of, found the final word.

A CHANT OF THE AGES

Into the darkness, trample the cross and the martyr's crown.
Crush the faith of your fathers down to the night's deep maw.
Tell us the soul is a shadow, tell us that love is a dream.
Tell us the world is helmless, a-drift in a measureless gloom!
Rave in the self-same breath of your "progress,"— down to your doom.
Progress down to the darkness, a blind implacable stream,—
Progress of planets and suns, whirled thro' a moment of law,
Out of the lawless into the lawless. Trample them down.

Mock! And we will out-mock you — whirl you hence like a wave!
Mock, for the night is upon you. Climb now, climb to your height.
Look on the glory of man in the light of the dying sun.
You that have darkened the heavens for those that had only their faith,
Mock, and we will out-mock you! Mock, O, wraith of a wraith!
What? You have "progress" to sell, in a hell where such horrors are done.
Mock, O gluttons of death, for the night is upon you, the night!
How shall you elbow the rest of us out of our home in the grave?

Mock, and we will out-mock you. You have heaped dust on your youth,
Blinded the eyes of the simple, and juggled with words for an hour!
Mock! For the ages are moving against you like waves of the deep.
Mock, for the stars overhead in the depths of the night conspire —
Legions of orderly forces, chariots of pitiless fire,
Marching against you, marching so swiftly, they seem but to sleep;
Till, as you mock them, on heights beyond height, beyond thought, the legions of truth
Plant the unshakeable flags of the Kingdom, the Glory, the Power.

How shall you measure or think of them, in the same breath as you say
They are beyond all thought, unknowable? You who confess
This was the ground of your doubting — that all men are utterly blind!
Doubt not the ground of your doubting — that these things are greater than you,

Greater than even your Art, greater than even you knew,
Greater than even your flesh, greater than even your mind,
Greater than all that was born of them, greater, not less, not less,
Even than man, or the brute, or the slime, where your thought runs dwindling away.

Have not your sophisters told us that God is a blundering force
Groping in vain for the vision that shines in the mind of a fool ?
What, you are flogging the dead little anthropomorphic creeds?
Where is your creed to replace them? At least they climbed to a height,
And you say that your God crawls blindly, a dumb blind creature of night,
Crawls out of Nothingness, counts upon Time to repair His misdeeds!
O, Thou Timeless, Infinite, bowing Thy head in remorse,
Learn at the feet of a mountebank, come, and be patient in school.

O, Thou Unknowable, Infinite . . . Have we not heard of a dream
Made in the heart of a man, yet something deeper than this,
Made in the mind of a man, that exulted even in pain,
Knowing that Death was a gate thro' the narrower limits of Life,
So that he stood up and cried, triumphant because of the strife,
Crowned and girdled with peace, cried to the Day-Spring again,
Glory to God in the Highest, in an agony better than bliss,
One with the Godhead at last, in the Passion, the Vision Supreme.

This was a little vision. Trample it utterly down;
But where is your dream to replace it, and what have your visions unfurled?

New Things! Bones and a skull, under the skin of a man!
Mock, and we will out-mock you, for term by contemptible term,
You have denied and degraded all that the noblest affirm;
God into force, man into beast. Is this the new law that we scan,—
The greater evolved by the less? And you wear the philosopher's crown!
Ours was a Universe, inner and outer, yes, ours was the world.

It is the world you would shatter — the world where children are born.
It is the world you would shatter, where wise men kneel at their feet.
It is the world you would shatter, where Life is crucified still.
When you rebelled in the darkness, against this Passion and Love,
It was no dream you would shatter, this creed of the Snake and the Dove!
Would you reject it, because of the pain it embraces? O, crooked of will,
It is the world around you, palpable, bitter and sweet,
And the scorn of the ages laughs your rebellion to scorn.

Either not good you have called Him, or else of a less than All-Might.
It was the bonds you would break, in whose service alone you are free.
Asking for laws that are lawless, it is Creation you hate,
Chiding your bounds as a river that chides at the banks where it flows.
Would you have blood without veins, and a road that returns ere it goes?
Would you paint pictures, in gold upon gold, with a shadowless light?
It is a prayer that unprays its own praying, a prayer uncreate,

Asking for nought. It is you that have failed in the prayer, and not He.

Mock at the fable of Adam, you cannot reject it in Man.
Mock at the Passion of Heaven, you cannot reject it on Earth.
Here, it is here at your door, though you turn from the ultimate fount.
It is this world you would shatter! You strut with your scraps and your shards,
Epigrammatical sophists, and mad little pessimist bards,
Proffering new things, little soiled scraps from that feast on the Mount,
Soddened in Soho cafés, and end where your fathers began,
End in miraculous dust, which — you say — had a virginal birth.

Born of Fashion — that Virgin — born in the fulness of Time,
Cradled in Nothingness, nourished by accident, ages ago,
Slumbered an embryo, holding within it . . . I speak as a fool . . .
London, Paris, and Rome, the streets and the lights and the roar.
Nothing was yet to be seen but a jellyfish, flat on the shore
Yes — there was doubtless a shore, for the earth was beginning to cool;
So it had doubtless been hot, which implies, as philosophers know,
Nothing at all; though London, and Paris, and Rome, were implied in its slime;

So were Socrates, Dante, Shakespeare, Kant and the rest.
Water may clamour for water. But souls in a void were implied.
There was nothing before them equal at all to themselves,—
Only the rapidly cooling earth as it rolled on its way.
Then the pageant began, and slowly marched to the day,
Till, in the fulness of time, there shone on the wild seashelves

Thousands of jelly-fish, left by the tide. There was doubtless a tide.
That was the life-force, blundering blindly with law in its breast.

O, the miraculous world, when the sun sank over the sea;
O, the colours, the rainbows that shone on that desolate shore,
Nursing your limitless "progress," under the dawn of the moon,
Waiting — under the stars — for the birth of a world of tears.
Close your eyes on the vision. Sleep for a billion years,
Then open your eyes and behold it, a Cross and a night in your noon,
And a voice ringing and crying, for ever and evermore,
Eloi! Eloi! Eloi! Lama Sabacthani!

Close your eyes on the vision. Sleep but one æon away.
Open your eyes in the darkness; for death has laid hold on the sun.
See where it hangs, a red ember, and earth is colder than death.
There is no relic of man, no ruin, not even a tomb,
Only the ice and the snow and the deep green measureless gloom,
Mocked by the cold white stars; and listen, one terrible breath
Shuddering out of the Void, like the moan of a spirit astray —
"Sleep, O cities, O nations, the last long night is begun,"

Mock, and we will out-mock you, for now to this end are ye come,
Mock, for we are the ages, and we that were old are still young
Where are your tricks and your fashions, your cries of the day and the hour.
Sleep, O terrible cities, your wars are accomplished at last.

All your conquests are conquered. All your "progress" is past.
Have we not travailed together and brought forth Glory and Power?
Where are the mighty cathedrals that rocked to the psalms that we sung?
Is even your Art not immortal? And the shallow mouth, is it dumb?

No — let us whisper together; for we that were old are still young.
We are the endless ages. We shall not labour in vain.
Out of our groaning together who knows but a god may be born?
Ah, speak low, we have time, and infinite time, for that end.
Infinite time we have spent, nor diminished the store that we spend.
Were there no God in the past, we still move to a deepening morn,
And, in the gates of the future, He waits, till a harvest be sprung
Out of the worlds upon worlds that we sow in the darkness like grain.

Worlds upon numberless worlds, through that beautiful darkness move,
Far off, in that measureless future. All that the prophets you killed
Dreamed in their dark strange hearts of a heaven that should answer their cry,
Sings through those mightier hosts as they wheel on their glittering way.
Death shall descend into night. Life shall arise into day.
Life, exultant, triumphant, shall mount to the Day-spring on high,
Mount to the unknown God, with the light of His vision fulfilled,
Mount out of discord, at last, to the sun-ruling music of love.

THE GIPSY

THERE was a barefoot gipsy-girl
  Came walking from the West,
With a little naked sorrow
  Drinking beauty at her breast.
Her breast was like the young moon;
  Her eyes were dark and wild.
She was like evening when she wept,
  And morning when she smiled.

The little corners of her mouth
  Were innocent and wise;
And men would listen to her words,
  And wonder at her eyes;
And, since she walked with wounded feet,
  And utterly alone,
It seemed as if the women, too,
  Would make her grief their own.

Ah, had she been an old hag
  With shrivelled flesh and brain,
They would have drawn her to their hearts
  And eased her of her pain;
But, since her smooth-skinned loveliness
  Could only hurt their pride,
They dipped their pins in poison;
  And, by accident, she died.

THE GARDEN OF PEACE

PEACE? Is it peace at last?
In the grey-walled garden I hear,
Under the rambling golden-crusted roofs,
The beautiful lichened roofs of Horsham stone,
Only the whisper of leaves,
And a blackbird calling.

Peace, and a blackbird calling his bright-eyed mate;
Peace, and those young, those beautiful hosts of the dead,
So quietly sleeping, under the mantle of June;
Peace, and the years of agony all gone by
As if they had never been!
Is it peace at last?

The blackbird flutters away in a rain of petals.
Under the open window a land-girl passes,
Dainty as Rosalind, in her short white smock,
Corduroy breeches and leggings and soft slouch-hat.
She swings her basket, happy in her new freedom,
And passes, humming a song.

She walks through the grey-walled garden,
Watched by the formal shadows of older days,
The shadows her grandam knew, in poplin gowns
And arched sun-bonnets, like old dry crumpled rose-leaves.
They peep at her, under the dark green peacock-yew.
They smile at her, under the big black mulberry boughs.
With an exquisite self-reproach in their wise old eyes,
They whisper together, like dim grey lavender blooms,
Glad of her careless joy, *"She will not grow old,*
Never grow old, as we did."

See, she pauses,
Now, at the grey sun-dial,
Whose legend, lichen-encrusted in rusty gold,
Lux et Umbra vicissim,
Semper Amor,
Was read by those that rustled in hooped brocades,
Admiringly round it, once, in its clear-cut youth.

A moment, there, she pauses, youthful, slim.
She reads the hour on its old dim dreaming face,
Half mellowed by time, half eaten away by time.
She does not see the shadows around it now.
It is only the hour she sees.
The rest is a dazzle of hollyhock shadows and sun.

She goes her way.
She darkens the deep old arch in the clipped yew-hedge,

And vanishes, leaving an arch of light behind her.
Lux et Umbra vicissim,
Semper Amor!
Is it all a dream,
This unbelievable peace?
The sunlight sleeps on the boughs.
The bees are drowsy with heat.

Tap-tap, tap-tap!
Ah no, not the telegraph giving the range to the guns;
It is only a dreamer, knocking the ash from his pipe,
On the warm grey crumbling wall at the garden's end,
Where the crucified fruit-trees bask,
Those beautiful fruit-trees,
Fastened, with arms outspread.

Tap-tap, tap-tap!
Now all is quiet again. There is only a whisper,
Calm as the whisper of grass,
On a sunlit grave.

Is it peace? Was it only a dream
That, under this beautiful cloak of the sunlit world,
We saw a blood-red gash in the clean sweet skin,
And the flesh rolled back by the hand of the surgeon, War;
And there, within,
Alive and crawling,
The cancer;
The monstrous cancer of hate,
With octopus arms,
Gripping the blood-red walls of its tortured hell?
Is it peace at last?

Oh, which is the dream? I hear
Now, in the grey-walled garden,
Only the whisper of leaves;
And now, on the southerly wall,
The dreamer, knocking the ash from his pipe again,
Tap-tap, tap-tap;
And the cry of a bird to his mate.

IN MEMORIAM

Henry La Barre Jayne

May 10th, 1920

God beckoned him across the night.
The best of many friends has passed
Into that world of purer light
And peace, at last.

Oh, City, that he loved, be proud.
He loved you till his latest breath,
With love too great to breathe aloud.
In life, or death.

Without one thought of self he gave
His work, his dreams, his life for you.
There were more mourners at his grave
Than any knew.

It will be long before you find
A heart like his on earth again,
So quick to feel with all mankind
In joy and pain.

It will be long before you see
Such faith as lit his eyes in youth;
That brave and deep humanity,
That constant truth.

The golden heart that knew no guile,
Those eager eyes abrim with mirth,
Conquered our darkness with a smile
And left, on earth,

A memory fragrant as a prayer,
A music that exalts our sky,
A light that broods upon the air
And cannot die.

THE RUSTLING OF GRASS

I CANNOT tell why,
But the rustling of grass,
As the summer winds pass
Through the field where I lie,
Bring to life a lost day,
Long ago, far away,
When in childhood I lay
Looking up at the sky
And the white clouds that pass,
Trailing isles of grey shadow
Across the gold grass. . . .

O, the dreams that drift by
With the slow flowing years,
Hopes, Memories, tears,
In the rustling grass.

THE REMEMBERING GARDEN

UNDER those boughs where Beauty dwelt
A wistful glory haunts the air,
As though the joy she gave and felt
Had left its phantom there.

The lilacs bloom beside the door
As though their mistress were not dead,
And their sweet clouds might dream, once more,
Above her shining head.

Nothing endures of all those wrongs
That broke her heart before she died;
But little ghosts of happy songs
Croon, where she laughed and cried.

Like phantom birds, be-winged and gay,
Among the rustling leaves they go.

Her phantom children laugh and play
Upon the path below.

For, though they've journeyed far since then,
At times an April breath will come
And lead them from the world of men
Back to their mother's home.

No shadow of her deep distress
Darkens their dreaming garden-ground;
But oh, her phantom happiness
That weeps, and makes no sound!

THE TRUE REBELLION

I HEARD one say, "A proud immortal face,
Too fair for earth, in dreams has smiled on me,
And robbed my mortal bride of all her grace
And changed my love to a withering mockery."

"Then O you visionary powers," I cried,
"May I be worthier all my own life long,
To walk with my own comrade side by side,
And shield a mortal love from that deep wrong.

"May all that in me fails of your pure light
Draw one dear hand more close to mortal mine;
Then — leave us to our memories in the night,
And, when our flickering torch has ceased to shine,

"Say, in your blasphemous heaven, if you say aught,
Those two dead fools despised our loftiest thought."

TO THE PESSIMISTS

BECAUSE I will not darken the dark sky
Of any soul with my poor clouds of gloom,
Think you I know them not; think you that I,
A fellow-traveller to Eternity,

Have never felt the cold breath of that tomb
  Wherein not only tragic lovers lie,
But little faces, crushed in their first bloom,
  Born but to smile in love's dim eyes, then die,
Decay, crushed down by one remorseless doom.
O friend, what need to strain for elbow-room?
  We shall find room enough there, you and I.

Needs it so keen a gaze to mark all this,
  The horror, the dumb pain?
"Ah, but you sing life's bliss,"
You cry, "you proffer us unrealities!
  Too shallow is the strain
That will not note how all things run amiss;
  But still cries *hope!* in parrot-like refrain."

If all things run amiss, whose heart, whose brain
  Shall judge of its own errors, even in this,
Where thought is folly and all our utterance vain.
But, if these lives which come and go like waves
  Appearing, vanishing, never can be pent
    In what we call our graves,
But do return to that great sea which lies
  Beneath their ebbs and flows;
To unity with that harmonious sea;
  Oh, not to a blind sleep
In a blind Godhead (which we reckon blind
  Because of the strict walls of man's own mind);
Not to a vacant sleep,
  But something far more deep;
Not something less than personality,
  But something more, so infinitely more
That, of its own miraculous excess,
  It cried *I am, I am,* where absolute nothingness,
Before the world, with nothingness were content;
  If this great sea resume all life (as man
In memory contains his vanished hours),
  Though darkness cloak the universal plan,
Yet, on that primal miracle of being,
    That inconceivable,
    Impossible miracle,

The mind may base its most substantial towers,
Without which there's no hearing and no seeing,
No thought, no speech, that wrecks not its own powers.

And so, for all the nightmares that I see,
Never shall grief of mind pretend
That you, or I, or any can transcend
The deep grave heart of joy
Which is the heart of all humanity.
I hear its even beat
Through all the rambling highways of the town.
I hear that laugh of children in the street,
Which not the red-piled barricades can drown!
I hear mankind singing among its graves,
The seamen singing as their ships go down!
Theirs is the little harmony that saves,
The rhythmic law no rebel can destroy,
The close-knit order that at last shall leaven
Chaos and Death, and turn the world to Heaven.

I see that while the inconstant battle rages
The steadfast leaves are green.
I hear the singing spheres, the marching ages.
Though war should pour its cataracts of blood
Through every seaward rift of Time and every gaunt ravine,
It cannot stain that all-embracing sea
Whose names are Music and Eternity.

Though war's wild crimson flood
O'erbrim the banks, and dye our fields anew,
All this shall be as if it had not been.
Life guards the truth. Death never yet spoke true.
Let the dark Anarch with his bloody dew
Drench the deep-ordered dust from east to west,
The world-embracing harmony shall not rest
Till all these things are folded in its breast.
Let him shout "red," earth has not heard or seen.
Her leaves, her fields, are green.
Though man's blind Justice bare an unjust blade,
Earth's darkling error is one proof the more

That when heaven's wider balances are weighed,
  Diviner Justice shall redress the score;
For there's one debt most certain to be paid,—
The Maker's debt to that which He has made.
If worlds of rock and stone could trample out
  The light in the eyes of a child
For a God or another's need,
  This life would be
  A darker mystery,
Than could be left for one brief hour to doubt.

On this I base my creed;
  Because no other basis can be found
For life iteslf. Rather the battle-shout,
  The sword, rebellion absolute,
Against all life. Let the world take the plunge
  Into the dark at once; cut the foul root
Whereby we hang above the eternal night.
  What, you would write,
Bind, print on hand-made paper your despairs,
  Assume artistic airs,
When, if your dark imaginings be true,
  If but one child's heart could be trampled out,
The only honour left you were to die.
  There is no room for doubt.
Although this age runs wild,
  There are some things we *know*.
Though, false as water, all things else may go,
  Never shall time subordinate
  The great to the less great,
The love in one child's heart to this blind dust.
If that young faith within her eyes
Were noble, that which lies
Beyond the world is nobler. This I *know*.
On this I base my creed. On this I base my trust.

FOUR SONGS, AFTER VERLAINE

I

Autumn

Touch the dark strings.
Pale Autumn sings.
  Wet winds creep
The bare boughs through . . .
O, woods we knew,
  I, too, weep.

Stifled and blind,
I call to mind
  Dreams long lost,
Dreams all astray
In that dead May,
  With Love's ghost.

Then I, too, go,
As the winds blow,
  Grey with grief,—
Hither, thither,
I know not whither,—
  A dead leaf.

II

Rain

My heart is full of the rain
  As it weeps on the dim grey town.
Oh, what is this endless pain
  That weeps in my heart with the rain?

The grey sky breaks into tears
  On the brown earth and grey roofs.
O heart, after all these years,
  Are you heavy with tears?

It rains without reason to-night,
In a heart that is numbed with pain.
A world without hope of the light
Grieves without reason to-night.

Ah, the one grief keener than all
Is to wonder — when grief is fled —
Why the tears of the old time fall
In a heart grown tired of it all.

III

Illusion

The mirrored trees in that nocturnal stream
Drown like a cloudy dream.
The bird upon the green bough, looking down,
Sees his own shadow drown.

He thinks it is his true love drowning there,
And moans in his despair.
How many a heart on high among green leaves,
Grieves, as that sweet fool grieves.

IV

The Angel

Soul, art thou dreaming still
And sorrowing, even to death?
Up! Dreams are to fulfil!
Onward, till thy last breath,
With all thy strength and will.

Oh, hands that fold in sleep,
When wrongs are still to right;
Oh, craven lips that keep
Their silence in the night;
Oh, eyes too dead to weep —

Does not the hope we knew,
Though but a hope, abide?

And now, to prove anew
  That truth is on thy side,
Hast thou not suffering, too?

Enough of dreams and tears!
  See, faint and far away
A glimmering light appears.
  Awake! It is the day!
Have done with doubts and fears.

Dark, dark against that light
  The Angel, Duty, stands.
But go to him forthright,
  Ay, give him both thy hands,
And all his mien grows bright.

His heart shall bring to birth
  Treasure that none hath told;
Wisdom beyond all worth;
  And love, more true than gold,
More sure than aught on earth;

For, though thine eyes be wet,
  He guards one bliss for thee;
One heaven, unguessed at yet,
  Whose unhoped ecstasy
Shall teach thee to forget;

Yes, even on earth, forget.

EARLY POEMS

THE PHANTOM FLEET

(1904)

THE sunset lingered in the pale green West:
  In rosy wastes the low soft evening star
Woke; while the last white sea-mew sought for rest;
  And tawny sails came stealing o'er the bar.

But, in the hillside cottage, through the panes
The light streamed like a thin far trumpet-call,
And quickened, as with quivering battle-stains,
The printed ships that decked the parlour wall.

From oaken frames old admirals looked down:
They saw the lonely slumberer at their feet:
They saw the paper, headed *Talk from Town;*
Our rusting trident, and our phantom fleet:

And from a neighbouring tavern surged a song
Of England laughing in the face of war,
With eyes unconquerably proud and strong,
And lips triumphant from her Trafalgar.

But he, the slumberer in that glimmering room,
Saw distant waters glide and heave and gleam;
Around him in the softly coloured gloom
The pictures clustered slowly to a dream.

He saw how England, resting on her past,
Among the faded garlands of her dead,
Woke; for a whisper reached her heart at last,
And once again she raised her steel-clad head.

Her eyes were filled with sudden strange alarms;
She heard the westering waters change and chime;
She heard the distant tumult of her arms
Defeated, not by courage, but by Time.

Knowledge had made a deadlier pact with death,
Nor strength nor steel availed against that bond:
Slowly approached — and Britain held her breath -
The battle booming from the deeps beyond.

O, then what darkness rolled upon the wind,
Threatening the torch that Britain held on high?
Where all her navies, baffled, broken, blind,
Slunk backward, snarling in their agony!
Who guards the gates of Freedom now? The cry

Stabbed heaven! *England, the shattered ramparts fall!*
Then, like a trumpet shivering through the sky
O, like white lightning rending the black pall
Of heaven, an answer pealed: *Her dead shall hear that call.*

Then came a distant light of great waves breaking
That brought the sunset on each crumbling crest,
A rumour as of buried ages waking,
And mighty spirits rising from their rest;
Then ghostly clouds arose, with billowing breast,
White clouds that turned to sails upon their way,
Red clouds that burned like flags against the West,
Till even the conquering fleet in silence lay
Dazed with that strange old light, and night grew bright as day.

We come to fight for Freedom! The great East
Heard, and was rent asunder like a veil.
Host upon host out of the night increased
Its towering clouds and crowded zones of sail:
England, our England, canst thou faint or fail?
We come to fight for Freedom yet once more!
This, this is ours at least! Count the great tale
Of all these dead that rise to guard thy shore
By right of the red life they never feared to pour.

We come to fight for Freedom! On they came,
One cloud of beauty sweeping the wild sea;
And there, through all their thousands, flashed like flame
That star-born signal of the Victory:
Duty, that deathless lantern of the free;
Duty, that makes a god of every man.
And there was Nelson, watching silently
As through the phantom fleet the message ran;
And his tall frigate rushed before the stormy van.

Nelson, our Nelson, frail and maimed and blind,
Stretched out his dead cold face against the foe:
And England's Raleigh followed hard behind,
With all his eager fighting heart aglow;
Glad, glad for England's sake once more to know

The old joy of battle and contempt of pain;
  Glad, glad to die, if England willed it so,
The traitor's and the coward's death again;
But hurl the world back now as once he hurled back Spain.

And there were all those others, Drake and Blake,
  Rodney and Howard, Byron, Collingwood;
With deathless eyes aflame for England's sake,
  As on their ancient decks they proudly stood,—
  Decks washed of old with England's purplest blood;
And there, once more, each rushing oaken side
  Bared its dark-throated, thirsty, gleaming brood
Of cannon, watched by laughing lads who died
Long, long ago for England and her ancient pride.

We come to fight for England! The great sea
  In a wild light of song began to break
Round that tall phantom of the Victory,
  And all the foam was music in her wake:
  Ship after phantom ship, with guns a-rake
And shot-rent flags a-stream from every mast
  Moved in a deepening splendour, not to make
A shield for England of her own dead past;
But, with a living dream to arm her soul at last.

We come to die for England: through the hush
  Of gathered nations rose that regal cry,
From naked oaken walls one word could crush
  If those vast armoured throats dared to reply:
  But there the most implacable enemy
Felt his eyes fill with gladder, prouder tears,
  As Nelson's calm eternal face went by,
Gazing beyond all perishable fears
To some diviner goal above the waste of years.

Through the hushed fleets the vision streamed away,
  Then slowly turned once more to that deep West,
While voices cried, O, England, the new day
  Is dawning, but thy soul can take no rest

Thy freedom and thy peace are only thine
By right of toil on every land and sea,
And by that crimson sacrificial wine
Of thine own heart and thine own agony.

Peace is not slumber. Peace, in every hour,
Throbs like the heart of music. This alone
Can save thy heritage and confirm that power
Whereof the past is but the cushioned throne.

Look to the fleet! Again and yet again,
Hear us who storm thy heart with this one cry.
Hear us, who cannot help, though fain and fain,
To hold thy seas before thee, and to die.

Look to the fleet! Thy fleet, the first, last line:
The sword of Liberty, her strength, her shield,
Her food, her life-blood! Britain, it is thine,
Here, now, to hold that birth-right, or to yield.

So, through the dark, those phantom ships of old
Faded, it seemed, through mists of blood and tears.
Sails turned to clouds, and slowly westward rolled
The sad returning pageant of the years.

On tides of light, where all our tumults cease,
Through that rich West, the Victory returned;
And all the waves around her whispered "peace,"
And from her mast no battle-message burned.

Like clouds, like fragments of those fading skies,
The pageant passed, with all its misty spars,
While the hushed nations raised their dreaming eyes
To that great light which brings the end of wars.

Ship after ship, in some strange glory drowned,
Cloud after cloud, was lost in that deep light
Each with a sovran stillness haloed round.
Then — that high fleet of stars led on the night.

MICHAEL OAKTREE

Under an arch of glorious leaves I passed
Out of the wood and saw the sickle moon
Floating in daylight o'er the pale green sea.

It was the quiet hour before the sun
Gathers the clouds to prayer and silently
Utters his benediction on the waves
That whisper round the death-bed of the day.
The labourers were returning from the farms
And children danced to meet them. From the doors
Of cottages there came a pleasant clink
Where busy hands laid out the evening meal.
From smouldering elms around the village spire
There soared and sank the caw of gathering rooks.
The faint-flushed clouds were listening to the tale
The sea tells to the sunset with one sigh.
The last white wistful sea-bird sought for peace,
And the last fishing-boat stole o'er the bar,
And fragrant grasses, murmuring a prayer,
Bowed all together to the holy west,
Bowed all together thro' the golden hush,
The breathing hush, the solemn scented hush,
The holy, holy hush of eventide.

And, in among the ferns that crowned the hill
With waving green and whispers of the wind,
A boy and girl, carelessly linking hands,
Into their golden dream drifted away.

On that rich afternoon of scent and song
Old Michael Oaktree died. It was not much
He wished for; but indeed I think he longed
To see the light of summer once again
Blossoming o'er the far blue hills. I know
He used to like his rough-hewn wooden bench
Placed in the sun outside the cottage door
Where in the listening stillness he could hear,
Across the waving gilly-flowers that crowned

His crumbling garden wall, the long low sigh
Of supreme peace that whispers to the hills
The sacred consolation of the sea.
He did not hope for much: he longed to live
Until the winter came again, he said;
But on the last sweet eve of May he died.

I wandered sadly through the dreaming lanes
Down to the cottage on that afternoon;
For I had known old Michael Oaktree now
So many years, so many happy years.
When I was little he had carried me
High on his back to see the harvest home,
And given me many a ride upon his wagon
Among the dusty scents of sun and hay.
He showed me how to snare the bulky trout
That lurked under the bank of yonder brook.
Indeed, he taught me many a country craft,
For I was apt to learn, and, as I learnt,
I loved the teacher of that homely lore.
Deep in my boyish heart he shared the glad
Influence of the suns and winds and waves,
Giving my childhood what it hungered for —
The rude earth-wisdom of the primal man.

He had retained his childhood: Death for him
Had no more terror than his bed. He walked
With wind and sunlight like a brother, glad
Of their companionship and mutual aid.
We, toilers after truth, are weaned too soon
From earth's dark arms and naked barbarous breast.
Too soon, too soon, we leave the golden feast,
Fetter the dancing limbs and pluck the crown
Of roses from the dreaming brow. We pass
Our lives in most laborious idleness.
For we have lost the meaning of the world;
We have gone out into the night too soon;
We have mistaken all the means of grace
And over-rated our small power to learn.
And the years move so swiftly over us:
We have so little time to live in worlds

Unrealised and unknown realms of joy,
We are so old before we learn how vain
Our effort was, how fruitlessly we cast
Our bread upon the waters, and how weak
Our hearts were, but our chance desires how strong!
Then, in the dark, our sense of light decays;
We cannot cry to God as once we cried!
Lost in the gloom, our faith, perhaps our love,
Lies dead with years that never can return.

But Michael Oaktree was a man whose love
Had never waned through all his eighty years.
His faith was hardly faith. He seemed a part
Of all that he believed in. He had lived
In constant conversation with the sun,
The wind, the silence and the heart of peace;
In absolute communion with the Power
That rules all action and all tides of thought,
And all the secret courses of the stars;
The Power that still establishes on earth
Desire and worship, through the radiant laws
Of Duty, Love and Beauty; for through these
As through three portals of the self-same gate
The soul of man attains infinity,
And enters into Godhead. So he gained
On earth a fore-taste of Nirvana, not
The void of eastern dream, but the desire
And goal of all of us, whether thro' lives
Innumerable, by slow degrees, we near
The death divine, or from this breaking body
Of earthly death we flash at once to God.
Through simple love and simple faith, this man
Attained a height above the hope of kings.

Yet, as I softly shut the little gate
And walked across the garden, all the scents
Of mingling blossom ached like inmost pain
Deep in my heart, I know not why. They seemed
Distinct, distinct as distant evening bells
Tolling, over the sea, a secret chime
That breaks and breaks and breaks upon the heart

In sorrow rather than in sound, a chime
Strange as a streak of sunset to the moon,
Strange as a rose upon a starlit grave,
Strange as a smile upon a dead man's lips;
A chime of melancholy, mute as death
But strong as love, uttered in plangent tones
Of honeysuckle, jasmine, gilly-flowers,
Jonquils and aromatic musky leaves,
Lilac and lilies to the rose-wreathed porch.

At last I tapped and entered and was drawn
Into the bedroom of the dying man,
Who lay, propped up with pillows, quietly
Gazing; for through his open casement far
Beyond the whispers of the gilly-flowers
He saw the mellow light of eventide
Hallow the west once more; and, as he gazed,
I think I never saw so great a peace
On any human face. There was no sound
Except the slumbrous pulsing of a clock,
The whisper of the garden and, far off,
The sacred consolation of the sea.

His wife sat at his bed-side: she had passed
Her eightieth year; her only child was dead.
She had been wedded more than sixty years,
And she sat gazing with the man she loved
Quietly, out into that unknown Deep.

A butterfly floated into the room
And back again, pausing awhile to bask
And wink its painted fans on the warm sill;
A bird piped in the roses and there came
Into the childless mother's ears a sound
Of happy laughing children, far away.

Then Michael Oaktree took his wife's thin hand
Between his big rough hands. His eyes grew dark,
And, as he turned to her and died, he spoke
Two words of perfect faith and love — *Come soon!*

O then in all the world there was no sound
Except the slumbrous pulsing of a clock,
The whisper of the leaves and far away,
The infinite compassion of the sea.
But, as I softly passed out of the porch
And walked across the garden, all the scents
Of mingling blossoms ached like inmost joy,
Distinct no more, but like one heavenly choir
Pealing one mystic music, still and strange
As voices of the holy Seraphim,
One voice of adoration, mute as love,
Stronger than death, and pure with wedded tones
Of honeysuckle, jasmine, gilly-flowers,
Jonquils and aromatic musky leaves,
Lilac and lilies to the garden gate.

O then indeed I knew how closely knit
To stars and flowers we are, how many means
Of grace there are for those that never lose
Their sense of membership in this divine
Body of God; for those that all their days
Have walked in quiet communion with the Life
That keeps the common secret of the sun,
The wind, the silence and the heart of man.
There is one God, one Love, one everlasting
Mystery of Incarnation, one creative
Passion behind the many-coloured veil.

We have obscured God's face with partial truths,
The cause of all our sorrow and sin, our wars
Of force and thought, in this unheavened world.
Yet, by the battle of our partial truths,
The past against the present and the swift
Moment of passing joy against the deep
Eternal love, ever the weaker truth
Falls to the stronger, till once more we near
The enfolding splendour of the whole. Our God
Has been too long a partial God. We are all
Made in His image, men and birds and beasts,
Mountains and clouds and cataracts and suns,
With those great Beings above our little world,

A height beyond for every depth below,
Those long-forgotten Princedoms, Virtues, Powers,
Existences that live and move in realms
As far beyond our thought as Europe lies
With all its little arts and sciences
Beyond the comprehension of the worm.
We are all partial images, we need
What lies beyond us to complete our souls;
Therefore our souls are filled with a desire
And love which lead us tow'rds the Infinity
Of Godhead that awaits us each and all.

Peacefully through the dreaming lanes I went.
The sun sank, and the birds were hushed. The stars
Trembled like blossoms in the purple trees.
But, as I paused upon the whispering hill
The mellow light still lingered in the west,
And dark and soft against that rosy depth
A boy and girl stood knee-deep in the ferns.
Dreams of the dead man's youth were in my heart,
Yet I was very glad; and as the moon
Brightened, they kissed; and, linking hand in hand,
Down to their lamp-lit home drifted away.

Under an arch of leaves, into the gloom
I went along the little woodland road,
And through the breathless hedge of hawthorn heard
Out of the deepening night, the long low sigh
Of supreme peace that whispers to the hills
The sacrament and sabbath of the sea.

THE SACRED OAK

(A SONG OF BRITAIN)

I

Voice of the summer stars that, long ago,
  Sang thro' the old oak-forests of our isle,
Enchanted voice, pure as her falling snow,
  Dark as her storms, bright as her sunniest smile,

Taliessin, voice of Britain, the fierce flow
Of fourteen hundred years has whelmed not thee!
Still art thou singing, lavrock of her morn,
Singing to heaven in that first golden glow,
Singing above her mountains and her sea!
Not older yet are grown
Thy four winds in their moan
For Urien. Still thy charlock blooms in the billowing corn.

II

Thy dew is bright upon this beechen spray!
Spring wakes thy harp! I hear — I see — again,
Thy wild steeds foaming thro' the crimson fray,
The raven on the white breast of thy slain,
The tumult of thy chariots, far away,
The weeping in the glens, the lustrous hair
Dishevelled over the stricken eagle's fall,
And in thy Druid groves, at fall of day
One gift that Britain gave her valorous there,
One gift of lordlier pride
Than aught — save to have died —
One spray of the sacred oak, they coveted most of all.

III

I watch thy nested brambles growing green:
O strange, across that misty waste of years,
To glimpse the shadowy thrush that thou hast seen,
To touch, across the ages, touch with tears
The ferns that hide thee with their fairy screen,
Or only hear them rustling in the dawn;
And — as a dreamer waking — in thy words,
For all the golden clouds that drowse between,
To feel the veil of centuries withdrawn,
To feel thy sun re-risen
Unbuild our shadowy prison
And hear on thy fresh boughs the carol of waking birds.

IV

O, happy voice, born in that far, clear time,
Over thy single harp thy simple strain
Attuned all life for Britain to the chime
Of viking oars and the sea's dark refrain,
And thine own beating heart, and the sublime
Measure to which the moons and stars revolve
Untroubled by the storms that, year by year,
In ever-swelling symphonies still climb
To embrace our growing world and to resolve
Discords unknown to thee,
In the infinite harmony
Which still transcends our strife and leaves us darkling here.

. . . . . .

V

For, now, one sings of heaven and one of hell,
One soars with hope, one plunges to despair!
This, trembling, doubts if aught be ill or well;
And that cries, "Fair is foul and foul is fair";
And this cries, "Forward, though I cannot tell
Whither, and all too surely all things died";
And that sighs, "Rest, then, sleep and take thine ease."
One sings his country and one rings its knell,
One hymns mankind, one dwarfs them with the sky.
O, Britain, let thy soul
Once more command the whole,
Once more command the strings of the world-wide harmony.

VI

For hark! One sings, *The gods, the gods are dead!*
Man triumphs! And hark — *Blind Space his funeral urn.*
And hark, one whispers with reverted head
To the old dead gods — *Bring back our heaven, return!*
And hark, one moans — *The ancient order is fled,*
We are children of blind chance and vacant dreams.
Heed not mine utterance — that was chance-born, too.

And hark, the answer of Science — *All they said,*
Your fathers, in that old time, lit by gleams
Of what their hearts could feel,
The rolling years reveal
As fragments of one law, one covenant, simply true.

VII

I find, she cries, *in all this march of time*
And space, no gulf, no break, nothing that mars
Its unity. I watch the primal slime
Lift Athens like a flower to greet the stars!
I flash my messages from clime to clime,
I link the increasing world from depth to height!
Not yet ye see the wonder that draws nigh,
When at some sudden contact, some sublime
Touch, as of memory, all this boundless night
Wherein ye grope entombed
Shall, by that touch illumed,
Like one electric City shine from sky to sky.

VIII

No longer then the memories that ye hold
Dark in your brain shall slumber. Ye shall see
That City whose gates are more than pearl or gold
And all its towers firm as Eternity.
The stones of the earth have cried to it from of old!
Why will ye turn from Him who reigns above
Because your highest words fall short? Kneel — call
On Him whose Name — I AM — doth still enfold
Past, present, future, memory, hope and love.
No seed falls fruitless there.
Beyond your Father's care —
The old covenant still holds fast — no bird, no leaf can fall.

IX

O Time, thou mask of the ever-living Soul,
Thou veil to shield us from that blinding Face,
Thou art wearing thin! We are nearer to the goal
When man no more shall need thy saving grace,

But all the folded years like one great scroll
Shall be unrolled in the omnipresent Now,
And He that saith *I am* unseal the tomb:
Nearer His thunders and His trumpets roll,
I catch the gleam that lit thy lifted brow,
O singer whose wild eyes
Possess these April skies,
I touch — I clasp thy hands thro' all the clouds of doom.

X

Teach thou our living choirs amid the sound
Of their tempestuous chords once more to hear
That harmony wherewith the whole is crowned,
The singing heavens that sphere by choral sphere
Break open, height o'er height, to the utmost bound
Of passionate thought! O, as this glorious land,
This sacred country shining on the sea,
Grows mightier, let not her clear voice be drowned
In the fierce waves of faction. Let her stand
A beacon to the blind,
A signal to mankind,
A witness to the heavens' profoundest unity.

XI

Her altars are forgotten and her creeds
Dust, and her soul foregoes the lesser Cross.
O, point her to the greater! Her heart bleeds
Still, where men simply feel some vague deep loss.
Their hands grope earthward, knowing not what she needs.
We would not call her back in this great hour!
Nay, upward, onward, to the heights untrod
Signal us, living voices, by those deeds.
Of all her deathless heroes, by the Power
That still, still walks her waves,
Still chastens her, still saves,
Signal us, not to the dead, but to the living God.

XII

Signal us with that watchword of the deep,
The watchword that her boldest seamen gave
The winds of the unknown ocean-sea to keep,
When round their oaken walls the midnight wave
Heaved and subsided in gigantic sleep,
And they plunged Westward with her flag unfurled.
Hark, o'er their cloudy sails and glimmering spars,
The watch cries, as they proudly onward sweep,—
Before the world . . . All's well! . . . Before the world . . .
From mast to calling mast
The counter-cry goes past—
Before the world was God! — it rings against the stars.

XIII

Signal us o'er the little heavens of gold
With that heroic signal Nelson knew
When, thro' the thunder and flame that round him rolled,
He pointed to the dream that still held true.
Cry o'er the warring nations, cry as of old
A little child shall lead them! they shall be
One people under the shadow of God's wing!
There shall be no more weeping! Let it be told
That Britain set one foot upon the sea,
One foot on the earth. Her eyes
Burned thro' the conquered skies,
And, as the angel of God, she bade the whole world sing.

XIV

A dream? Nay, have ye heard or have ye known
That the everlasting God who made the ends
Of all creation wearieth? His worlds groan
Together in travail still. Still He descends
From heaven. The increasing worlds are still His throne
And His creative Calvary and His tomb
Through which He sinks, dies, triumphs with each and all,
And ascends, multitudinous and at one
With all the hosts of His evolving doom,

His vast redeeming strife,
His everlasting life,
His love, beyond which not one bird, one leaf can fall.

XV

And hark, His whispers thro' creation flow,
Lovest thou me? His nations answer "yea!
And — *Feed My lambs,* His voice as long ago
Steals from that highest heaven, how far away!
And yet again saith — *Lovest thou Me?* and "O,
Thou knowest we love Thee," passionately we cry:
But, heeding not our tumult, out of the deep
The great grave whisper, pitiful and low,
Breathes — *Feed My sheep;* and yet once more the sky
Thrills with that deep strange plea,
Lovest thou, lovest thou Me?
And our lips answer, "yea"; but our God — *Feed My sheep.*

XVI

O sink not yet beneath the exceeding weight
Of splendour, thou still single-hearted voice
Of Britain. Droop not earthward now to freight
Thy soul with fragments of the song, rejoice
In no faint flights of music that create
Low heavens o'er-arched by skies without a star,
Nor sink in the easier gulfs of shallower pain!
Sing thou in the whole majesty of thy fate,
Teach us thro' joy, thro' grief, thro' peace, thro' war,
With single heart and soul
Still, still to seek the goal,
And thro' our perishing heavens, point us to Heaven again.

XVII

Voice of the summer stars that long ago
Sang thro' the old oak-forests of our isle,
An ocean-music that thou ne'er couldst know
Storms Heaven — O, keep us steadfast all the while;

Not idly swayed by tides that ebb and flow,
But strong to embrace the whole vast symphony
Wherein no note (no bird, no leaf) can fall
Beyond His care, to enfold it all as though
Thy single harp were ours, its unity
In battle like one sword,
And O, its one reward
One spray of the sacred oak, still coveted most of all.

THE STATUE[1]

Slowly he bent above her jewelled hand
And kissed it. But the boy had little heart
To woo the glad young bride that others chose
And thrust upon him as his princedom's prize.
The daylight withered on her palace towers,
And all the windows darkened as he went
Wearily homeward, tortured with his thoughts,
Tired with his task of wooing without love,
Tired with the toil of all that empty speech,
And almost wishing loveless death would stay
The mockery of the loveless marriage morn.

Round him the woods, tossing their sombre plumes,
Shed heavy, wet, funeral fragrances;
And the wind, uttering one low tragic cry,
Perished. It was a night when wanderers
Bewildered there might dread some visible Death
Urging his pale horse thro' the dim blue light
Of haggard groves and poppy-haunted glades.

His path fainted into the forest gloom
Like a thin aisle along the wilderness
Of some immense cathedral long ago
Buried at some huge epoch of the world
Far down, under the mountains and the sea;
A wealth of endless vistas rich and dark
With secret hues and carvings and — his foot paused —

1 This is one of the author's earliest poems, not hitherto printed in America.

A white breast orient in the softening gloom,
A cold white arm waving above the shrine,
A sweet voice floating in a dreamy song
Till all the leafy capitals awoke
And whispered in reply! Was it the wind
Wafting a globe of flowery mist, a sigh
Of wild-rose incense wandering in a dream?

Far, far away, as through an eastern window,
Through low grey clouds, painted in curling folds,
The moon arose and peered into the nave,
The moon arose behind the dark-armed woods
And made the boughs look older than the world.

And slowly down the thin sad aisle the prince
Came with his eighteen summers. His dark eyes
Burned with the strange new hunger of his heart.
He knew how beautiful she was — his bride,
Whom others chose, but he had ever found
His love in all things, not in one alone.
He found the radiant idol of his moods
In waves and flowers and winds, in books and dreams,
In paintings and in music, in strange eyes
And passing faces; and too well he knew
The Light that gave the radiance must still fly
From face to face, from form to form. A word,
A breath, a smile too swift, and at his feet
There lay some broken idol, some dead husk,
And he must seek elsewhere that archetype
Reflected from some other shape of earth,
Darkly, as in a glass. Indeed his love
Dwelt deeper in the night than she who stole
In moonbeams on Endymion. His heart
Was lost beyond the shining of the stars.
His hopes were in his visions: like a boy
He dreamed of fame; yet all the more his love
Dwelt in the past among the mighty dead.
The emerald gloom, the rosy sunset skies
He loved for their old legends, and again
Wandered by lotus isles and heard the song
Of sirens from a shore of yellow sand.

The vanished Grecian glory filled his soul
With mystic harmonies that in broad noon
Added a wonder to the white-curled clouds,
A colour and a cry, a living voice,
Almost the visible Presences divine
To distant sea-horizons, dim blue hills,
Earth's fading bounds and faint infinities.
And now, as down the thin sad aisle the prince
Went footing tow'rds the moon, there came once more
A gleam as of a white breast in the dark,
A waving of a white arm in the dusk,
A sweet voice floating in a dreamy song.
He paused, he listened. Then his heart grew faint
Within him, as there slowly rose and fell
A sound of many voices drawing nigh
That mingled with his ancient dreams a song
Still scented like the pages of a book
With petals of the bygone years. He fell
Prone on his face and wept, for all his life
Thrilled in him as a wind-swept harp is thrilled;
And all the things that he had once believed
Seemed shattered by that wonder, and the world
Became his dreams and he a little child.
Slowly the distant multitude drew nigh,
And softly as a sleeping sea they sang:

Hast thou no word for us who darkly wander,
No lamp to guide our weary feet,
No song to cheer our way?
Where dark pine-forests sigh o'er blue Scamander,
The long grey winds are sweet,
And the deep moan of doves is heard;
While shadowy Ida floats in cloudless day;
Hast thou no word?

Hast thou forgotten the almighty morning
That smote upon the cold green wrinkled sea
And edged the ripples with a rosy light;
And made us count cold death a thing for scorning
Before the love of thee,
O mother, wave-begotten,

When love's first kiss was worth the last long night;
Hast thou forgotten?

Whispering ever nearer like a wind
The song sank into sweetest undertone,
While the faint murmur of innumerous feet
Came onward thro' the moonlit purple glades.
The prince arose to listen. Those wild tears
Yet glistened in his eyes against the moon.
His dread seemed lost in a great conscious dream:
For, one by one, like shadows of his mind,
Sad voices murmured near him in the dark
And gave his grief their own melodious pain.

I

The gods are gone! To-night the world's heart falters,
To-morrow it may be the sun will shine,
To-morrow it may be the birds will sing.
O Earth, my mother, the flame dies on thine altars!
I would my hands were folded fast in thine,
That thou wouldst make me sleep,
Wrapt in thy mantle deep,
Far, far from sound or sight of anything.

II

Dian is dead! No more the dark sweet forest
At moondawn murmurs with a holy song.
Into the night the feet of love are flown.
No more at noon the heaven that thou adorest
Opens to greet the golden Oread throng!
Anadyomene
Is buried in the sea,
The gods are gone. Thy children dream alone.

III

The gods are dead!—What god shall ever wake them?
Nay, if they lived, our world could never see;
And I, what should I do the while but sleep?

Sleep, while the purblind sons of men forsake them;
Sleep where the old world sleeps in peace with thee,
Sleep, dust in the old fair dust,
Sleep, in the same deep trust,
That all is well where none can wish to weep.

Perchance they were the shadows of his mind
That sang to him; but over his heart they crept
As winds of April over the budding leaves.
And still the rumour of innumerous feet
Stole like a strain of music thro' the woods,
Making the darkness wither into dreams;
Till, all at once, the moonlight blossomed and broke
And strowed the splendour of its quivering sprays
And white rent rose-leaves thro' the throbbing night.
Pansy and violet woke in every glade.
In every glade the violet and the pansy,
The wild rose and the white woodbine awoke.
The night murmured her passion, the dark night
Murmured her passion to the listening earth.
The leaves whispered together. Every flower
With naked beauty wounded every wind.
Under the white strange moon that stole to gaze
As once on Latmos, every poppied dell
Rustled, the green ferns quivered in the brake,
The green ferns rustled and bowed down to kiss
Their image in the shadowy forest pools.
Then one last wind of fragrance heralding
That mystic multitudinous approach
Wandered along the wilderness of bloom
And sank, and all was very still. Far, far
It seemed, beyond the shores of earth, the sea
Drew in deep breaths, as if asleep.
All slept.
Then like a cry in heaven the sudden hymn
Rose in the stillness, and across the light
That brooded on the long thin blossoming aisle,
Dim troops of naked maidens carrying flowers
Glided out of the purple woods and sank
Like music into the purple woods again.

But, when the last had vanished, the white moon
Withered, and wintry darkness held the trees,
And the prince reeled, dazed, till one strange cold voice
Out of the dying murmur seemed to thrill
The very fountains of his inmost life.
Oh, like another moon upon his night
That voice arose and comforted the world.
With one great sob he plunged into the wood
And followed blindly on the fainting hymn.

Blindly he stumbled onward, till the sound
Was heard no more; but where the gloom grew sweet
And sweeter, where the mingled scent of flowers
And floating hair wandered upon the dark,
Where glimpses pale and rosy moonlit gleams
Like ghosts of butterflies, fluttering softly
Thro' darkness tow'rds the sun, coloured the night,
He followed, thorn-pierced, bleeding, followed still.
Then, from his feet, a vista flowed away
Duskily purple as a seaward stream
With obscure lilies floating on its breast
Between wide banks of dark wild roses, grave
With secret meanings, deep and still and strange
As death; but, at the end, a little glade
Glimmered with hinted marble that implored
Its old forgotten ritual. For a breath,
He thought he saw that wave of worshippers
Foam into flowers against a rosy porch,
Leaving a moment after, only a dream
Amongst the gleaming ruins, of laughter flown,
And bright limbs dashed with dew and stained with wine.

But suddenly, as he neared the porch, the prince
Paused; for the deep voluptuous violet gloom
That curtained all the temple thrilled, and there,
There in the midst stood out the sculptured form
Of Her, the white Thalassian, wonderful,
A flower of foam, our Lady of the Sea.
Then, with wide eyes of dream, the boy came stealing
Softly. His red lips parted as he gazed,
His head bowed down, he sank upon his knees,

Down on his knees he sank before her feet.
Before her feet he sank, with one low moan,
One passionate moan of worship and of love.
In a strange agony of adoration
He whispered where he lay —"O beautiful,
Beautiful One, take pity. Ah, no, no!
Be as thou art, eternal, without grief,
Beautiful everlastingly." He rose
Adoringly he lifted up his face
To hers, and saw that sweet and cold regard,
The pitiless divine indifference
Of Aphrodite gazing thro' the years
To some eternal sea that calls her still.
Adoringly he lifted up his lips
And touched her, softly as a flower might kiss,
Once, on the cold strange lips.

There came a cry
Wounding the nerves with agonies of sweetness:
The marble moved, the immortal marble moved,
And every movement was an agony
Of bliss. The marble softened into life,
The marble softened as a clouding moon
That takes the first faint rose-flush of the day.
The lovely face bent down upon the boy,
The soft white radiant arms enfolded him.
She kissed him, once, upon his mortal lips,
Then — like a broken flower — down at her feet
He fell. The temple shone with sudden fire,
And through the leaves the wild miraculous dawn
Tumbled its ruinous loads of breathless bloom
On all the glades, and morning held the world.

But ere the morn had melted into noon
There came a grey-haired man before the King
And told that, as he went to gather wood,
Soon after dawn, he heard a bitter cry
Near that old ruined temple which, some said,
Was haunted still by wandering pagan souls
Too foul for heaven, yet ignorant of hell;
But he believed it not, and therefore crept

Quietly near to watch and saw the prince
Dead on the ground; and over him there bent
A white form, beautiful, but beckoning
To One more beautiful in the morning clouds,
The Mother of Bethlehem, to whom he prayed
Himself, but never knew her till that hour
So beautiful. For all the light that shone
From Aphrodite, shone from that deep breast
August in mother-love, with three-fold grace,
Enfolding all the lesser and raising all
That wind-borne beauty of the wandering foam
To steadfast heavens of more harmonious law;
And over her, in turn, diviner skies
Brooded, deep heavens enfolding all the world,
Himself, the woods, the dead prince and those twain
Long held as deadly opposites, but now
Strangely at one, though one was but the heaven
Of colour and light in the other's breast and brow,
And both but beaconed to the heavens beyond.

But when he led a silent troop of men
Far thro' the tangled copses to that glade,
They found the young prince like a broken flower
Lying, one sun-browned arm behind his head,
And on his dead cold lips a strange sweet smile.
Over him stood the statue, clothed with light;
And he who urged the loveless wooing crept
Back, for he had no heart to face again
The pitiless divine indifference
Of Aphrodite, queen of laughter and love
On old Olympus, but to this great dawn
A roseate Hebe, handmaid to the heavens
Of beauty, with her long white glowing side,
Pure sacramental hands and radiant face
Uplifted in that lovelier servitude
Whose name is perfect freedom, ministrant
In harmony with golden laws, thro' all
The passion-broken, cloudy, fleeting years,
To that eternal Love which calls her still.

DEDICATION

When all the ragged-robin ways of youth were ours to roam,
We lost the key to elfin-land among the hills of home.
We could not break the wizard-locks that gripped the gate we knew,
The delicate green and golden gate of gossamers and dew.

We hunted for the glimmering key. We thought we saw it gleam,
A green and crimson dragon-fly, by many a chuckling stream;
Till now, oh far and far away, to one that listens long,
The laughter of our summer day has deepened into song;

Oh, you may search among the firs, and I will search the fern;
And, if we find our talisman, there'll be no more to learn;
For you will call aloud to me, or I will call to you;
And the elfin gate will open on our world of dawn and dew.

It's likelier to be at our feet than hiding very far.
It's brighter than a flower, I think, but darker than a star;
So down the narrow glen we'll plunge in bracken to our knees,
And hunt for it as divers hunt for pearls in Indian seas;

Then through the may we'll rise again like swimmers through the foam,
And I will search the golden gorse, among the woods of home;
And you shall wade the crimson sea of clover through and through
Until we find the key again to all the dreams we knew.

But, if we cannot find it there, above the woods we'll climb;
And you may search the yellow broom, and I will search the thyme;

And we will ride the racing clouds, and whistle to the lark;
And, when the sky forgets the sun, we shall not fear the dark;

For in your steadfast eyes I'll look, and you will look in mine;
And there, together, we shall see the hidden glory shine;
Then all your soul will call to me, and mine will call to you;
And the gates of death will open on our world of dawn and dew.

THE END

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